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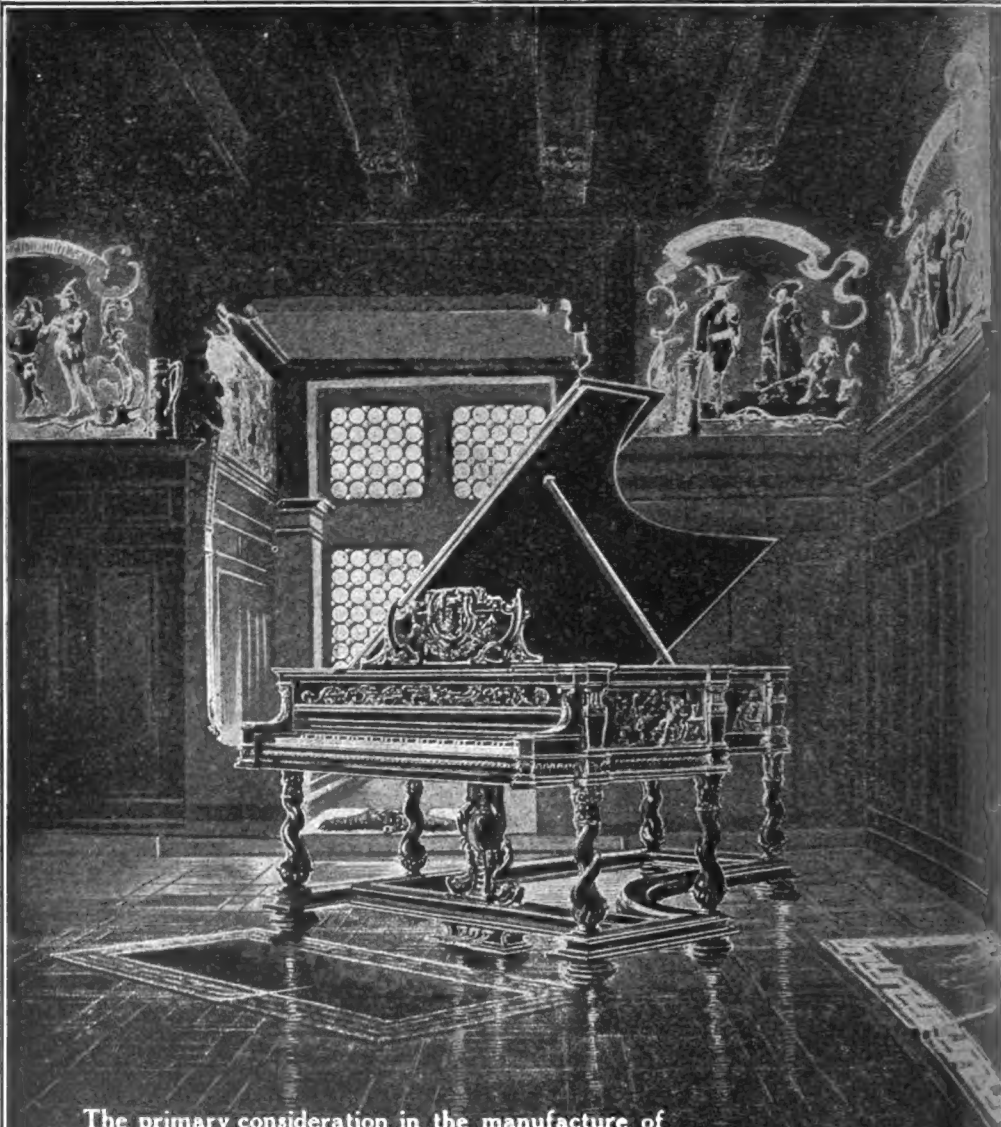
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXIII

DECEMBER, 1907

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THE BACKSLIDERS

By Dorothea Deakin

I

THE high orchard wall shut away the white dusty road, but they heard the tooting of the horns in the distance, and stood together on the unsafe, worm-eaten seat to see the procession. A cloud of dust heralded it.

"Here they come!" Hebe cried eagerly, her eyes bright with interest, her pretty lips pinched into a prim and obviously difficult disapproval. "Whirling down the broad path which leads to destruction in chariots of scarlet and gold," she murmured grimly.

Arnold laughed. Hebe was too funny sometimes. A big, handsome Mercedes whirled past them, full of laughing women in leather coats and elaborate veils, and men in goggles.

"There's Primrose!" the girl cried. "She's fatter than ever. And that dark woman beside her is Miss Mendelssohn, her great friend. She's a Jewess and quite handsome, but I—well, I don't think she's a good friend for Primrose."

The next motor came up almost hidden in the dust of the first. Hebe let it pass in disappointed silence, and gazed eagerly down the road again. It was ten minutes at least after the others before a light little car shrieked its way close under their high wall. A girl in a silky, apricot-colored veil was driving it herself, and she looked up at the two faces peering over the old red brick coping with a little sudden charming laugh, and kissed her hand to Hebe.

At the sight of the laughing, dimpled face and sweet blue eyes Arnold turned

abruptly to ask Hebe a question, but her gaze was glued to the scarlet back of the vanishing car with what seemed to him an unnecessarily wistful and strangely uncalled-for expression. Pity, love, horror and yearning were written there—for some inexplicable reason.

"And that, I suppose," Arnold said in an amused voice, "is——?"

"Yes, *that's* Letty Dill," said Hebe mournfully.

"And the lean Yankee beside her?"

"Mr. Schlesinger," Hebe said gravely. "They're engaged, you see."

"Why are you so sorrowful about it all?" he asked, turning to stare at her sober face. "She's charmingly pretty and a perfect dear, as anyone can see, and you've said yourself that Schlesinger's almost good enough for her. They look as happy as any every-day mortal on this absurd planet in common decency can. What a little Miss Glum you are, to be sure! Cheer up! *Do* cheer up!"

Hebe jumped from the seat to the grass and looked at him with reproachful eyes.

"How can I cheer up?" she asked, "when Letty is living in a false paradise? And she's steeped heart and soul in the deadly influence of Vanity Fair. We shall never see these things in the same light, Arnold, never. And now, hadn't you please better go home and do some work? The morning is much the best time for study; you know it is. Your brain is clearer and thought easier."

"I'd rather stay with you, Hebe," he pleaded dolefully. "Mayn't I stay

and play with you? I'll—I'll weed like blazes, if I may."

"I must go in and help Teresa with the strawberry jam. And there is no weeding to do."

Arnold glanced ruefully at the neat beds and tidy gravel paths in the distance.

"Let me string the strawberries for you, then," said he. "Let me do a little honest work for once, Hebe dear. Work would be play if I were helping you, you see. Don't drive me to the d——"

"Arnold!"

"The dull library at home," he substituted adroitly.

"You mustn't call me 'Hebe dear.' " She kept her eyes away from his face as she spoke. Arnold smiled persuasively.

"But how can I help it when you are? You hate a dissembler, I know, for you've told me so a thousand times. And, besides, depraved as I am, I can never bring it to my heart to deceive you."

Hebe didn't smile. She was a tall girl with an erect, boyishly-slim figure. Her eyes were very large and dark, and her hair was heavy and black and parted on one side. She wore a blue linen dress that she had made herself, very well indeed. A square, wide collar of white canvas embroidered in blues and greens gave her a Puritan air, and her dark, straight brows made her look rather fierce to an outsider, although her tender, beautiful mouth generally betrayed her to her friends.

Arnold watched her lips quiver now as she tried to set them in a firm line of disapproval.

"Do go home and study, Arnold, please. If you stay here now you've lost another day, and it's terrible to me to think of the days you're always losing."

"It doesn't worry me at all," Arnold murmured. "Strange!"

"You know you won't work after luncheon because you'll be so sleepy, and the hammock and the perfect peace of the garden will call you. You won't——"

"How clever you are!" Arnold interrupted admiringly.

"You won't work after tea because the river is always so perfect in the late afternoon sunshine, and——"

"I'm glad you realize that at last," he said. "I'll bring the boat——"

"You won't work after dinner," Hebe finished hastily, "because it's a sin and a shame to stay indoors on a Midsummer evening, when the moon lights up the river and all the fairies are abroad, and you'll have some urgent message to bring about the new perennials for Aunt John which you might just as well have given this morning. Arnold, are you *never* going to settle down to work?"

The young man sighed and looked across the orchard at a great patch of vivid blue-flags which had caught a shaft of sunshine between the apple-trees.

"The truth is," he said slowly and apprehensively, "that I don't like work."

"Arnold!" The girl's horror was almost too much for his gravity. She had been well brought up.

"Hebe, honestly now, wouldn't *you* rather play about in the garden all day, with the sun shining on you and the wind ruffling your pretty hair, than sit like a good little girl in a dull and dinnery kitchen making strawberry jam?"

Hebe was silent, and a blackbird in a cherry-tree over her head burst into jubilant and disdainful song.

"Tell the truth, Hebe, and shame the——"

"Don't!" she cried sharply. "We shouldn't enjoy our playtime if we didn't work sometimes. You know we shouldn't."

"I always enjoy my playtime. I could easily spend my whole life doing nothing. Nothing useful, that is to say. You can play at doing things, you see, my dear. Only then you may leave off at your own sweet will, and never even begin them unless you want to tremendously."

"Please don't be plausible with me. And you've been told a hundred times that 'All work and no play,'" Hebe

quoted sententiously, "'makes Jack a dull boy.' And once for all, Arnold, you are *not* to call me your dear."

"But suppose Jack doesn't ever want to be anything but the dullest of dull boys?"

Hebe gasped. A very real reason why he *should* occurred to her, of course, but she would not mention it.

"Someone has to make the strawberry jam," said she quickly. And Arnold noticed with a sigh that her lips had again settled into that rigid red line he was so much afraid of. He picked up his straw hat from the grass and rammed it on his head, turning moodily to go.

"Good-bye till tonight, then," said he sadly.

Hebe's face changed suddenly.

"Please, Arnold," she said quietly, "I don't think you'd better come to-night. I may—I expect I shall be engaged this evening."

He looked surprised.

"If Letty comes to see me," she said, with a sudden rush of color to her face, "I shall, of course, want to be quite alone with her."

"I see." He sauntered off without another word. It was absurd, petty, childish of him, he told himself, to be so jealous of a mere girl—a society butterfly who whirled over here for a week or two once or twice a year on a flying visit from gayer shores; a girl whom she, Hebe, so absolutely disapproved of, and yet so obviously adored.

"She disapproves of me, too," he said ruefully, "and yet—yes, she's fond of me. I could wish sometimes that Aunt John hadn't brought her up so entirely in the straight and narrow path. It's not the age for these intolerant, narrow-minded virtues of industry and thrift and self-denial. Hebe is fifty years behind the times. How can a man live up to these Middle Victorian standards—or a girl either?"

He thought of the pretty, merry face shadowed by wind-ruffled brown hair which had smiled up at them from between the curtains of the apricot veil.

"Poor Letty Dill," he said kindly; and he went home to make at any rate some pretense of study. He was sup-

posed to be reading for the law. His mother thought he had the legal face. And he was already six-and-twenty and quite happily living on the three hundred a year his father had left him. He had certainly never earned a penny in his life and had not the least hope that he ever would or could, and would have gone contentedly down to his grave in this ignominious state if it hadn't been for the disconcerting new element Hebe had suddenly introduced into his life, when she all at once became grown up, and in her own peculiar way—and Arnold's eyes—quite beautiful.

She went slowly back to the house after he had left her, across the cool, dark hall to the narrow passage leading into the big, light kitchen where the tables and chairs were always scrubbed so white and the covers on the wall so shining and beautiful. Lately it had taken all Hebe's spare time and the power of Aunt John's tongue to keep them in their white and shining perfection, for the servants were anything but what servants *had* been in Aunt John's young days.

Teresa, the wizened cook, was too old for work and subject to sudden strange illnesses which made bed an immediate necessity. Lucy, the pretty, impertinent little village housemaid, was only fifteen and absolutely untrained and unreliable. *She* was almost too young to work, so between the two Hebe had a lively time. She poured her strawberries into a bowl and began to pick with quick, capable fingers, but her thoughts were far away. Arnold, Letty; Letty, Arnold; Arnold, Letty. Both were so fond of her, so hopelessly unsatisfactory and yet so dear. Why was it, she asked herself bitterly, that the undeserving were always so terribly attractive to her?

"They must call out all the black, hidden-away sinfulness of my own heart," she thought miserably.

Teresa, bending her gray head over a pan of potatoes, stopped peeling them and turned to look at Hebe with her knife shaking in her trembling old hand.

"Like goes to like," she said gloomily, "and birds of a feather always call the kettle black. There's that Lucy leaning over the yard-gate talking to that Dredger's boy, and tellin' your aunt it was *me* as let 'er milk boil over this morning."

"It's not Lucy's business to boil Aunt John's milk," Hebe said severely. "Why did you leave it to her? If Aunt John scolded you, you brought it on yourself."

Teresa sniffed miserably.

"Me goin' down to the cellar to look for 'er dustpan that had got mislaid amongst the coals," she whined. "Up I comes to the kitchen and there's the milk a-risin' and a-risin' and pourin' down the sides. And Lucy flies in an' whisks it off the fire—as full of sauce she is, as a hegg's full of meat. 'See, Teresa,' she says, 'you were grumblin' because you were short of milk, and now the Lord's gone and filled your pan for you.' And a bare half-cup left for your aunt's breakfast, miss."

"You shouldn't have left it to Lucy," Hebe persisted doggedly.

"I never seed a girl like Lucy, not for sauce nor for deceitfulness neither. 'Fill the cup up with water,' she says, 'and she'll only think the milkman's given it us poor again same as 'e did before.'"

"Teresa!" Hebe, really horrified, stared at the old woman.

"Well, I'm tellin' you," said Teresa, with glum persistence. "And words can't tell the sauce I have to stand from 'er, nohow. 'For shame on your eyes and face, you naughty girl,' I said, 'to think of deceivin' Mrs. John like that, and she needin' her full nourishment as she does.' 'Lord!' said Lucy, 'what the heart doesn't see the eye doesn't grieve for.' And what can you make of a girl like that, Miss 'Ebe? I asks you. Look where she's left her black-lead brushes now."

Hebe looked, found Lucy, and pointed out that the drawn-thread cloth from her aunt's tray was not the proper resting-place for black-lead brushes, and went upstairs to the invalid's room.

Aunt John was not really an invalid. She was a handsome, hearty lady who was just recovering from influenza, and she was almost more than Hebe could manage at that time, for as she grew older and the weaknesses of the flesh grew stronger, a need for little comforts grew and multiplied in her. She began bitterly to repent of her old habits and precepts and to wish that she had brought Hebe up differently. For Hebe was very firm with her now, and did her best to make Aunt John live up to her own teaching.

"Have you finished your book, aunt? You want another, don't you? You haven't had 'God's Good Man' yet, you know."

"Oh, my dear!" Aunt John looked up from her basket-chair appealingly. "Can't I have something amusing this time—something a little lighter? I'm very depressed today. I think I want cheering up, my child, not elevating. I'm getting too old to be edified and elevated, I'm afraid, by these excellent books."

Hebe took "The Skipper's Wooing" from the drawer where she had hidden it from a laudable desire to keep temptation from Aunt John's reach, and settled down to her mending. But she was very restless and presently she put her sewing tidily away and went down to the garden to cut a big basket of roses. Letty, who was full of unrestrained and lavishly-wasteful tastes, liked to see the drawing-room extravagantly filled with flowers. It was a faded room full of Middle Victorian horrors, and even the constantly opened window failed to drive away that queer, musty smell, which Letty had once said choked her. Aunt John clung to the tidy mats and antimacassars that Hebe had made for her at school, and the piano was as heavily draped as the mantelpiece. L'art nouveau had no charms for Aunt John. And all these old draperies held and cherished the musty smell that Letty found unbearable. Hebe liked to see the flowers growing. Aunt John had always taught her to like that, and now that her aunt had weakened enough to

rather enjoy a flowery, bowery, metamorphosed drawing-room, Hebe, who was young and strong in principle, could not allow any backsliding. Yet this morning she ruthlessly cut more red roses and blue and white campanula than she would cut again the whole Summer, and after luncheon she filled every vase and bowl and jug in the house, and even put a big shallow bowl of sweet-peas on the black, mirror-like hall-table. She had to polish it first herself, however, to make it mirror-like, for Lucy's heart was not in her elbows, by any means. All the afternoon, while Aunt John had the nap which she was allowed only as a convalescent, she drifted aimlessly about the garden, or sat and watched the drive from the hall window-seat.

"She *may* come in the motor," she said to herself, anxiously listening for any hideous sound which might announce it. "Or she may slip across the park after luncheon without her hat, in the careless way she used to do."

Then when tea-time came:

"Perhaps she was tired and rested this afternoon. No—not Letty; Letty never rests if she can help it. I expect they wouldn't let her come. Primrose always depends on her so to keep people amused. She used to do it at Christmas."

She sighed, and agreed with Aunt John that Teresa should have notice, as well as Lucy, if she sent up such scones as those again.

"You could tile the hall with them," said her aunt.

A picture suddenly filled Hebe's mind's eye of the big paneled hall with its dark shining armor, the antlers and guns on the walls, the bear and tiger skins, of the beasts, shot by the earl, in his otherwise uninteresting youth; the slippery floor, Lady Primrose's tea-table by the great open fireplace. No, of course not, it wasn't Christmas now. How silly she was! It was June, and they'd rushed away from town for a few days' rest and fresh air. No doubt they would be having tea on the terrace. There would be red and white striped awnings up, and

the front of the ugly Italian house would look bright and even pretty for once. There would be one or two hammocks and deep lounging-chairs. Primrose would be in white, very fat and pink and frilly, rather like a Baroness Rothschild rose in general outline, and Violet Mendelssohn would be beside her doing all the real work of the tea-table, talking smart and amusing nonsense, and managing to look very handsome in spite of her big features and dark skin. And the little American woman, Mrs. Van Rooy, will be very noisy and pretty, and very beautifully overdressed, in something silky and pale and very much embroidered, with too many rings on her ridiculously small hands. And then—Letty! Letty! She sighed.

"Do give that cat its cream, Hebe," said Aunt John. "You've filled a saucer with weak tea. Are you going to drink it yourself? I suppose you are, for Selim certainly isn't."

Hebe absent-mindedly put down more cream than she considered right.

Letty would wear the prettiest gown of them all—she always did—something ephemeral and hopelessly unserviceable, with blue in it to match her eyes. She would sit a little way off from the others, with two or three men around her—or perhaps only Mr. Schlesinger, the American she was going to marry, and she would be flushed and half-smiling all the time; beautiful and lazy and as happy doing nothing as Selim was when he slept in the sun and only waked up to ask for cream; purring, too, if you stroked her. She was the kind of girl you always wanted to stroke, however much you disapproved of the practice.

"Aunt John," she said sharply, "how can you expect that cat to catch mice if you pamper him so? He's as idle and good-for-nothing as he can be."

"There aren't any mice," said Aunt John amiably. "Another cup of tea, my dear."

The long three hours between tea and dinner wore away. Hebe was nervous and restless. After dinner she tried to practise a little while, and then read

aloud to Aunt John from "The Treasures of Heaven," under strong protest, until the poor lady, in despair, went to bed. And then, quite alone, she sat by the open window of the drawing-room, oppressed by the heavy breath of the roses she had gathered all for nothing, and cried a little from pure disappointment. The lawn stretched away from the French windows, shining grayish-white with the dew in the bright light of the moon, and the black trees beyond threw dark shadows. And then suddenly one swiftly-moving shadow separated itself, and came running across the white lawn toward the open window. Hebe rose with a pleased, half-startled cry. Laughing, panting, the shadow dropped its dark cloak as it slipped into the room, and enfolded Hebe in soft white arms and rustling silk and lace.

"You've caught my hair in your diamond star," said Hebe in a half-choked voice. "And your dress is dripping wet at the bottom. Oh, Letty dear! to come out in those shoes!"

II

"It's like you to talk to me of wet shoes, when I haven't seen you since Christmas," Letty cried, sweeping across the room, turning up one incandescent light after another. "You don't mind if I turn a little light on the scene, do you? You know how I hate to sit in the dark. And besides, I want to look at you. Hebe, my dear, I'm horribly afraid you're growing into a very handsome young woman."

Hebe smiled. She was only human.

"I can't see it," said she earnestly. "I really can't see it myself. I don't admire that style at all. And I haven't wished you joy yet, Letty—I was so glad to hear—you're very happy, aren't you? You were so miserable at Christmas it nearly broke my heart to see you. I *am* so glad you are happy now."

Letty was not satisfied with the gas. She lifted the pink shade from the standard lamp and held out a little helpless-looking hand to Hebe.

"Matches, dear? At Christmas, was

I? Was I miserable then, too? I dare say. Don't tell me there *aren't* any matches here. May I ring for them?"

Hebe hastily found a box in its accustomed home on a neat fret-work bracket.

"No, don't ring. It's a rule of aunt's that we never ring after nine. Why do you say 'then too'? You are happy now, surely? You're engaged. I saw it in the paper, long before you wrote to me, that you were engaged to him—to Mr. Schlesinger. And you told me at Christmas—I've never forgotten what you told me at Christmas. Don't you love him like—like that any longer, then, Letty?"

Letty dropped the matches and turned swiftly round. She was always very quick in her movements; and although she was not really very young—she must have been at least five- or six-and-twenty at that time—she had always somehow the freshness of youth in her sweet, clear voice, in her pretty laugh, in her beautiful eyes, her bright hair.

"Love him?" she said. "I—it's much worse than that, Hebe. I'm afraid I worship him."

She stooped to pick up the box and as she did so something else fell from her folded belt to the ground with a chinking thud.

Hebe picked it up. It was a little glittering chain purse—a pretty toy studded with brilliants. She gave it up with a smile.

"What a girl you are, Letty! And what a place to put a purse! Why bring it out at all tonight?"

"I came straight out of the drawing-room across the terrace and the lawn. I didn't wait to go up for a cloak or change my shoes, or anything. I wanted to see you so badly. Hardy ran after me with this cloak, but I haven't the faintest idea whose it is. He wanted to come with me, but I wouldn't let him, of course. He's coming to take me back presently, though. Poor dear, he will *hate* the wet grass so. He's nearly as particular about that kind of thing as you are, Hebe."

She looked ruefully at her little soaked shoe. Hebe with a quick movement fell to her knees and took it off.

"Give me the other," she said. "You must put on mine. They're too big, of course, but I can't have you catching cold. I'll dry yours in the kitchen and put on another pair myself."

Letty slipped her little silk-stockinged feet into Hebe's plain strapped shoes, and held them up one after another with childish amusement.

"What very sensible shoes you always do wear, don't you?" She smiled charmingly as she said it, but Hebe realized at once with a pang that Letty must find them ugly and awkward. "But what a dear you are to worry about the old things! May I come down to the kitchen with you? It's such a long time since I saw anybody's nice, warm, cozy kitchen, and I always loved to go and steal cakes when I was a kiddie."

"No." Hebe had a strong sense of what was fitting, even if she hadn't had her doubts about the state of that apartment when Teresa and Lucy had quite done with it for the night. Letty was no Cinderella, even if she *had* lost her slippers.

"Don't be away long, then. I hate to be alone and I shall have to hurry back when Hardy comes. I must—I simply *must* talk to you."

She walked restlessly to and fro, turning the lights still higher, rearranging the roses, upsetting one tall, topheavy vase and leaving the flowers and water as they fell, without attempting to repair the damage to the polished card-table over which the water streamed; trying the piano lightly, and finally stopping a long time to gaze at her own photograph in a silver frame on the mantelpiece. Hebe found her still gazing at it.

"Have I grown any older, Hebe?" she asked in suddenly anxious tones as the girl came up to her.

Hebe drew her nearer to the light and examined her face anxiously.

"N-no," she said. "At least, there is a new little line between your eye-

brows, and your cheeks are rather thinner. Yes, you *are* thinner, Letty. And oh, why *do* you put that dreadful powder on your face? I can't bear to see you using meretricious aids to the beauty God gave you."

Letty laughed at her shocked voice and prim little speech, and rubbed her cheek with her handkerchief.

"You're not very comforting," she said. "I don't powder, you little goose. It's Ambrosine. She will give it a *souçon* when she's finished massaging me, however much I protest against it. Hebe, dear, it's the sober truth."

"Massaging? Letty!" Hebe's face was really distressed as she spoke, and Letty put her hands on the girl's shoulder.

"Ambrosine," she said softly, "is a jewel, a treasure. She belongs to Philippa Van Rooy—Hardy's sister, you know. She's had lessons from a beauty doctor and Phil lends her to me as a great favor. I use her only as a preventive. It's just as well that I should while I have the chance, don't you think?"

"But you're so pretty and you look so young, Letty. It is absurd, even if it isn't wrong, which it most *certainly* is."

Letty sank into a corner of the sofa and Selim jumped at once to her knee.

"Listen to her," she said to him; "she points out the wrinkles of age and the furrows of time and then tells me I don't need a masseuse. And as for right and wrong, we never did agree on those trifling and out-of-date questions, did we? Let's talk about something else."

She leaned her head back on the frilled and faded cushion, and Selim stretched and languished and purred under her sympathetic hands. The light over her head fell full on her elaborately dressed hair and merry face, but Hebe saw that it was her mouth only which was smiling. Her eyes held a different expression. Suddenly remembering her hair, Letty put a hand at the back of her neck to hold it from the disheveling cushion.

"Are you happy, Letty?"

Letty's face grew suddenly tired, older, fretful.

"As happy as the rest of us, I dare say," she said. "There's always something. Bother! there's my purse again." It slid this time to her knee, and she teased Selim with the bright, dangling thing.

"Why a purse tonight, Letty?" Hebe's tone was gravely persistent.

Letty raised her eyebrows.

"Bridge, of course."

Hebe started, her dark eyes grew black with sudden fear.

"Bridge!" she repeated. "I thought you said in your letter that you'd promised to give up bridge now. Didn't you promise Mr. Schlesinger to give it up?"

"Oh, promises!" Letty said sullenly, rubbing Selim's hair the wrong way with absent-minded unkindness. "I only play for penny points in the drawing-room. Lord Wintergrey doesn't allow anything higher, and one must do as the Romans do. Hardy allows me to play for penny points."

Hebe's sigh was almost a deep breath of relief.

"Oh, well," she said, "if *that's* all. But you frightened me. You were so miserable at Christmas——"

Letty shut her eyes and lay back in silence for a few minutes. Then she opened them wide and began to speak in an entirely changed voice—a humble, ashamed, frightened voice.

"And I'm miserable now," said she in slow, deliberate tones. "I won't lie to you, Hebe. You're almost the only person I *have* never lied to, and I won't begin. How do you suppose I pay my debts—though I haven't been able to pay any for a long time? How *am* I going to pay them in the future?"

Hebe sat and stared at her in silent horror.

"I have four hundred a year," said Letty, "and I have to live amongst women who think nothing of spending four hundred pounds on one dress."

"You *needn't* live amongst them," Hebe said in a low voice.

Letty laughed bitterly.

"I'm nearly twenty-seven," she said,

"and born and bred in it. It isn't easy to give up the life you've always lived. And, indeed, I can't give it up till I get straight. I *must* get clear before I'm married. And then—oh, it will be easy then. I'll give it up fast enough when Hardy marries me. But I must get some money now, somehow. I owe more than I dare to tell you, Hebe, to Ethelrose—and I can keep her quiet only by ordering new things. We are to be married next Easter—nine months and more away, and there'll be the money to find for my trousseau and for all my debts. And then you expect me to give up bridge!"

"Do you make money, then?" the girl asked slowly. "Do you win?"

Letty teased Selim with her purse brutally.

"Yes," she said, "of course I do. I'm an extremely good player. Not just lately. I've had rather a run of ill luck lately, but it's bound to turn soon. I think Robinwood brings me luck, Hebe. It did at Christmas when I found you here."

She smiled at the girl with that slow and extraordinarily winning smile which had so entirely won Hebe's heart and made her so deaf and blind to her principles and conscience and all the strict teaching of her youth, which Aunt John had once so reveled in and now so deeply deplored. It was last Christmas that Letty had first found and charmed and enslaved her.

"And besides," Letty said, with an entire change of front and a defiant, merry glance, "I like bridge. So there. Life would be a dull business without it now. I can't do without excitement."

"And after you are married?"

Letty was silent.

"After you are married, Letty?"

"It is a long time to next Easter," she said, with a curiously nervous laugh, "and Hardy's got to be away in the States on business all the Autumn. Something to do with mines in Nevada, I think, but he never talks business to me. And——"

"What's that got to do with it?" Hebe asked bluntly. "If he is away,

it will be much worse for you to deceive him than if he were here. You *must* see that."

"I see that it will be much *easier*," said Letty lightly. "I wonder why he doesn't come. I shall be late. It's half-past eleven now. Lord Winter-grey won't like it. *He* never altogether approves of me, but Primrose is a dear, and I mustn't disappoint her. She said twelve o'clock."

"What are you talking about? Late for what?"

"Bridge," Letty remarked defiantly. "We're to meet in Primrose's room at twelve for a game—well, a proper game. The usual four of us."

"The usual four?"

"Yes. Primrose and Violet Mendelssohn and Philippa Van Rooy and me. Violet's been winning lately and she's very keen. She's quite fine, you know. She's never been known to forget a card. I admire Violet tremendously, and she's so rich, too. It doesn't really matter to her whether she wins or loses," she finished, with a sigh. "It's a wonderful and beautiful thing to be rich."

"I dislike Miss Mendelssohn," Hebe said sententiously. "Not because she's a Jewess—I'm not narrow enough for that, of course—but I think she's *mean*. And she isn't *strictly* truthful."

Letty broke into a rueful little laugh full of meaning.

"Ah, but you're different," Hebe cried, "and you never, never, never *could* be mean! She is not a person I could trust."

"Oh, trust!" Letty said slightly, "I never met anyone I could, till I met you. One doesn't want to trust one's acquaintances; one wants to be amused. Violet's full of fun. She's ripping good company."

Hebe winced. Aunt John had once hated slang and done her level best to make Hebe share her dislike. Now that Aunt John reveled in Kipling and Jacobs and delighted in Arnold's free conversation, Hebe was still true to her aunt's early precepts.

"How long shall you play tonight?" she asked sadly.

Letty got up and looked for her cloak. "How long? Oh, two—three. I—don't know. It depends. You'll find my shoes for me, won't you? I won't wait for Hardy."

Hebe's eyes filled with tears as she stumbled down the stairs and across the dark hall to the kitchen. She found the little absurd shoes, still damp, of course, and she kissed them before she took them back. When she opened the drawing-room door she drew back for an instant, and rattled the door-handle.

Letty disengaged herself from Schlesinger's arm and held out her hand for the shoes, steadying herself as she put them on, by his shoulder.

"Hardy brought the motor," she said. "The men had all gone, but he has a key—he always has a key in case he wants to start for the other end of the world in the middle of the night. And he's brought it out for this little, tiny way. Isn't he absurd?"

Schlesinger shook hands with Hebe with obvious pleasure, for he had admired and liked her very much when he met her at Christmas, and thought her such a good friend for Letty. He was a thin, brown man of thirty-five or so, with a deeply-lined, strong face and narrow, keen eyes.

"He's brought you a note from Primrose," Letty went on. "I forgot to give you her message about dining tomorrow. And she's sent her own coat for me because it's warmer than mine."

Hebe went out with them to the gate, but directly they started Letty with a scream made Schlesinger stop. She jumped out and ran back to Hebe, who was still standing, a dark, straight figure, at the gate in the moonlight.

"My purse," she said quickly. "I've left it on the sofa. I'll run in."

"No, I will." Hebe crossed the damp lawn with flying feet and soon came back with the precious article.

Schlesinger was waiting with Letty, and though the girl hastily tucked it under her cloak, the shining thing caught his quick eye.

"Wouldn't that valuable piece of

property have waited till tomorrow?" he asked in his drawling voice.

"No," said Letty sharply. "I wasn't sure that I'd brought it, and I couldn't have closed my eyes if I hadn't known for certain where it was."

III

In sending Hebe down to dinner with the vicar Lady Primrose thought she had done an extremely tactful thing. For, as she said to Philippa Van Rooy, he was quite a dear, and yet suitable because he was in the church, and therefore bound to be serious-minded enough for Hebe, though no one would have guessed it if he hadn't worn clerical clothes. She never dreamed of associating that nice, good-for-nothing boy, his nephew, Arnold Greenhagh, with Hebe. She gave him to Phil, because Phil had asked for him. The house-party for the week's rest was singularly wanting in young men. There was Hardy Schlesinger, but he belonged to Letty Dill, and there was Mr. Monton Forcoe, who edited and engineered the mild sporting novels which the earl published frequently at his own expense. There was young Hailesfoot, who wanted to marry Miss Mendelssohn's money, and belonged, in spite of his name, to the tribe of Judah; and a professor with a handsome, keen old face, who had reared on his promising germ farm a new fertilizing bacillus invaluable in agriculture, and who endured the earl's mild scientific pretensions, and stammered platitudes, for the sake of their young college days together.

Hebe, in her home-made gown, did not look dowdy. She never did. It was a white Empire frock made of cashmere, and she had beautifully embroidered the little square-cut short-waisted bodice with pale greens and blues and heliotropes. Arnold, as he watched her between the yellow roses and silver candlesticks, thought there wasn't a girl in the room to hold a

candle to her. Her dusky skin might make her look a little Eastern, and her long, slim neck and erect, thin young figure might look schoolgirlish and immature, but there was enough and more than enough to make up for it and gild these deficiencies in his eyes, till they were merely added charms. But she was not an amusing companion for the vicar.

"Were you ever very fond of a person?" she asked abruptly in her deep voice.

He started, and tried to withdraw his attention from his excellent soup.

"Er—yes," he said; "several. Why not?"

He was a kind and generous old bachelor, one of those easy-going and emancipated clergymen who make it their business to reconcile the teaching of the Anglican Church as they go along with all the latest scientific discoveries. Hebe had often wished that he had been more earnest and serious-minded, a less gay and easy-going shepherd to his unprincipled flock.

"Then," said she, her eyes on Letty's radiant face, her ears always listening for her constant laugh, "if you were very fond of a person, and you saw him deliberately racing to ruin along the downward path, what would you do?"

He turned and regarded her with some amusement. Her clear, delicate profile was rigid as she spoke. There was no tenderness about the curve of her lips then.

"I should, to a mild extent, try to work upon his affections, I am afraid, though I hardly approve of such methods theoretically."

Hebe flushed a little.

"Suppose you had tried all that and failed," she said slowly, "what would you do then?"

"Do you mean if I were you, or myself?" the vicar asked thoughtfully.

"If you were I."

"Ah," said he, "then I think I'd leave the person alone. I don't suppose you *could* work a brake tactfully in any case, you're too downright and uncompromising, my dear. And in nine cases out of ten it's best to leave

people to work out their salvations in their own way. At least, that's what I find."

"It isn't always salvation they do work out," Hebe cried in a fierce, low voice. "Sometimes it's——"

"Damnation?" he suggested meekly, with a twinkle in his eye. "Well—even then——"

"I might have known I shouldn't get any help from you," she murmured wrathfully.

Lady Primrose, glancing down the table, was appalled by her face. The vicar, poor dear, was having a bad time, she thought. But then he was used to Hebe, of course.

"I've always been too much of a backslider myself to venture to advise my brothers. And Hebe, my dear, aren't you rather hard on poor Arnold? He isn't really such a black, black sheep, you know."

She turned on him with amazed dark eyes.

"Arnold? You thought I meant him?"

He shrugged his shoulders, and gave up the riddle.

"I am very much disappointed," he said politely, with a swift change of topic, "to find that Mrs. John isn't here. It always does her so much good to get a little gaiety."

Poor Aunt John! She had nearly wept in Hebe's arms over Lady Primrose's note, for alas! in these degenerate days she loved a good dinner better than her own soul, and with Teresa for a cook—well, it was rather too bad that she was still much too weak to go. Hebe had come alone.

Aunt John was the second cousin of the earl's first wife, and Hebe was her own niece. She had always lived with her, and always been patronized and petted and endured by Lady Primrose when she happened to be at Robinwood. Hebe had been a dreadfully good little girl, but she played games very well, and if she steadfastly refused to do forbidden things herself, she had never told of other people's law-breaking. Primrose was twenty-three now, very woman-of-the-worldish, and much too

fat. People used to ask one another what she would be like at forty, if she was like this now. But she was simple and unaffected and kind, and swayed by every wind that blew; a slave in turn to Violet Mendelssohn and Letty Dill. And she was rather too much like her father, who had stammered and bored two pretty young wives into their graves, to be loved much in return by the object of the moment's affection. Yet many people found her useful, and everyone found her kind. Mrs. Hending Folsoy, the duenna cousin, found her duties easy enough under Primrose's rule.

In the long drawing-room later on Hebe avoided the two bridge tables, and slipped quietly through the open windows to the terrace. She was in much too serious a frame of mind to descend into light and frivolous feminine gossip, and she liked the long sweep of park which fell away below the terrace and lower lawns. The moon was shining on the silver streak of canal which bordered it, and the woods beyond were very black and still. She leaned over the stone balustrade looking steadily before her, but her heart, her mind, hardly even her eyes were there. They were with Letty. In ten minutes or more someone slipped quietly through the window and joined her. She thought she knew the step, and did not turn her head.

"It breaks my heart," she said slowly.

"What breaks your heart?" Schlesinger asked in an amused voice. "It does look charming tonight, doesn't it? But I should hardly have thought *you* would be the kind of person to consider the world in any aspect too beautiful to bear."

Hebe turned quickly, but she didn't explain. If he liked to think her silly enough to talk about a sacred thing like one's feelings for beauty, in that absurd way, to an almost stranger, he would have to do it now, for it was quite impossible to explain to him what she had really meant. Schlesinger was only teasing her, however, and perhaps it was as well that she did not know

how nearly he had guessed the thought which had led to that careless speech. She didn't even say that she had thought it was Arnold who had come out to her, but her face colored with a quick glance of annoyance.

Schlesinger sat down on the balustrade and looked at her as she stood there. The smooth hair parted on one side made her look like a pretty, sulky boy.

"Look here," he said slowly, "you're very fond indeed of Letty—Letty Dill, aren't you?"

Hebe started.

"Yes, of course," she said without hesitation, meeting his keen gaze with clear, wondering eyes.

"Of course," Schlesinger repeated, with a sigh. "Yes, everybody's fond of her. She talks pretty freely to you about most things, I guess?"

Hebe grew suddenly conscious that she must be on her guard. She answered steadily, however, that they were very good friends.

"I should like to ask you a question in strict confidence," the American said, still watching her face as he spoke. "You're a very sincere person, Miss Nunn. I think you're the only really truthful girl I've met over here so far." He stopped, but his face was very stern.

"Will you tell me," he asked gently, after a moment's pause, "if Letty is playing bridge now?"

Hebe grew pale. Then she glanced through the open window into the brilliantly lit room where Letty sat at the nearest card-table, her elbows on the table, her anxious eyes on her partner's face. Her hand—the dummy—lay open on the table, and Letty's partner, Mrs. Van Rooy, was playing it with a smiling, eager little face in full profile.

"There's Letty," Hebe said, "playing now." But she hated herself for the equivocation, and felt that Schlesinger knew that she was equivocating.

"For penny points," he said quietly. "That isn't exactly what I meant, though. Letty promised last Christmas that she would give up gambling.

She had, of course, to go on playing—well, for the stakes she is playing now. All the world must play bridge, or go into a nunnery, she says. But I hear a good deal about the high play that girls have amongst themselves nowadays. Letty goes to her room before half-past eleven every night. She comes down next morning at half-past ten looking like a ghost—tired and worn and nervous. She's always nervous now, even in the motor, and I used to think her the pluckiest girl I had met on this side of the water. And I've overheard scraps of talk between some of them. My sister and Lady Primrose are not the most careful people in the world. Where does Letty go? What does she do between half-past eleven and two and three o'clock in the morning?"

Hebe had been listening in horror, dismay, fear; racking her brain to find a solution for this awful problem which had so suddenly been presented to her. She realized keenly that whichever way she decided to act, act she must as soon as he had finished speaking, without hesitation. For to hesitate *was* to answer.

Her first move was, of course, to adhere to her strict and narrow code of right, to speak the truth at all costs. At *all* costs! It would only be at poor Letty's cost. Letty's face, as she had turned it radiantly and suddenly to her the night before and said, "I'm afraid I worship him," rose suddenly before her eyes.

It occurred to her that Schlesinger might be the kind of man who could love Letty enough to forgive her, even if she had broken her promise, but she knew that if he was to do that, the truth must come from Letty herself. Only by frank and immediate confession could she save herself, and even then . . . Yes, Schlesinger's face in repose was a hard face, yet—yet—Hebe had never told a lie since she was ten years old. The idea of lying about this for Letty's sake was dreadful and unspeakably repugnant to her. And Schlesinger had finished speaking and was repeating his last words.

"Where does Letty go—what does she do when she leaves the drawing-room every night?"

"I don't understand you," Hebe said in a low, miserable voice. How cruel, how unfair it was that the undeserved horror of this black problem should be thrust upon her!

Schlesinger watched her gravely.

"Miss Nunn," he said, "you don't wish to betray your friend. That's it, I feel sure. You are asking yourself how you *can* tell me what I ask and still be a true friend? I beg you—I implore you to tell me. Please tell me. It is better—it is really better for Letty that you should tell me this. Do these girls play bridge amongst themselves all night? Is that it?"

A wild desire to tell him the whole truth and beg him to marry Letty at once and take her away from it all seized her. If she only knew him better! She knew so little about men. Suppose he cast off poor Letty for her broken word . . . A broken promise was so terrible a thing to Hebe herself that she could well believe it would be the same to a man like Schlesinger.

"I don't think so," she said in a broken and unconvincing voice. "I don't think so. But Mr. Schlesinger," she cried reseatfully, "I think you oughtn't to have asked me. I think you ought to have asked Letty herself."

His face grew harder.

"I have asked Letty," he said. "She—I am sorry to say she is afraid of me. And I won't ask questions of those other women about her. I saw that you loved her, and that you were an honorable girl. You think, then, that Letty has kept her promise?"

"Yes," said Hebe quickly. "Yes."

"Thank you." He spoke in a low, relieved voice.

Hebe shivered and turned to go.

"It is rather cold. I'll go in, I think," she said, and Schlesinger said no more. Indeed, Arnold met them as they went back through the window, and there was no further opportunity.

"Miss Dill's in the seventh heaven tonight," he said gaily. "She's made

a grand slam out of a no-trump hand and Miss Mendelssohn had doubled them. I never saw such a lucky deal in my life. Lord Wintergrey wants you to sing to him, Hebe. I'll play for you."

Poor Hebe!

"I'm so sorry," she said. "My head aches, Arnold. I wonder if I might go home now. It's past ten. I think Aunt John will want me home early tonight."

She waited till Lady Primrose had finished her hand, and then said good night. She was to be sent back in a carriage, and Arnold took her down to it. On the top of the steps before the great door she turned to him suddenly with an overwhelming desire to be supported and comforted against her conscience, and then, even as she spoke, her heart changed, and she wished that Arnold might champion her own rigid creed instead of backing her up in her weakness.

"Arnold," she said, with her miserable eyes and trembling lips turned away from him, "supposing—you're quite a truthful person, aren't you, even if you are—?" She hesitated.

"Even if I am traveling fast in the down express," Arnold suggested brilliantly. "As truthful as most people, I dare say. What have you been finding me out in now, Hebe?"

"It isn't that," said Hebe hastily. "Only, if you had suddenly to choose between betraying the confidence of someone who had trusted you and telling a dreadful lie, what would *you* do?"

"Lie like blazes!" said Arnold without hesitation.

IV

"Aye," said Mrs. Lythgoe with meaning, "they did so. The very first day as they come to the 'All. Down the lane they whizzes, a-hootin' and gruntin' in their motor machine, and Lady Primrose stops and smiles at me, and a fine, stout, 'earty young woman she is gettin' to be! And as pink i' the

face as a rosydandrum. She didn't get out, but Miss Dill, her as they call Letty, she did, with 'er pretty smile, and brings me wine, an' jelly, an' soup, and flowers—roses fresh from the 'All garden. You can come in an' look at 'em if you like, and good soup, too—none of your dried-pea stuff, but same as the earl drinks with 'is supper o' nights. And not a word about my soul, nor 'is, nor no threats of readin' aloud to us from none of 'em. Them's real ladies, I said to 'im when they'd gone 'ootin' off, an' he couldn't say no different."

Hebe smiled rather sadly.

"Lady Primrose is always very kind to you, isn't she?" she said. "But wine is very bad for your husband, I'm afraid. He'll be breaking out again before long, if you let him taste temptation. And Mrs. Lythgoe, my aunt would like you to come tomorrow to do a day's cleaning. Teresa isn't well."

Mrs. Lythgoe sniffed. She thought she understood Teresa's complaint very well, but she dared not say so.

"I'll come," she said with kindly condescension. "An' you might mention to that Lucy, if you please, Miss 'Ebe, that she'll 'ear summat she won't care about if I don't find the kettle bilin' ready for my breakfast when I come. Never a drop of 'ot water for love or money with them two. I can't think 'ow your aunt's kep' 'em so long as she 'as done. I call it a real charity to keep on that old Treessa with 'er 'abits. But I'll not cast no slurs nor make mischief between families as I work for. Tell your aunt as I'll be up at nine, all bein' well."

Hebe's head was aching as she turned to go home, and she felt that the path of the righteous was indeed hard. She had slept hardly at all that night, and had tossed and turned and shivered till the morning, hot with shame for the lie she had told, and cold and sick with horror at the thought that perhaps after all it would have been better for poor Letty if she had told the truth and begged Mr. Schlesinger to forgive the miserable girl because he loved her.

"It must always be best to do right,"

she thought, "at whatever cost. It can't ever be even wise or expedient to do evil that good may come. Oh," she told herself bitterly, "I'd better have listened to my conscience, after all." For remembering the hesitating and confused way she had behaved the evening before she began to wonder if she had really deceived him. She had lied too baldly. Perhaps she knew she had been lying and she had done herself harm in his eyes, and Letty no good. Yet it was done now. What was the good of worrying about it? It was all over. Over, was it? Hebe's aching head and heavy heart said "No" to this. She had been so honorable all her life. She had kept her precious soul so clear and clean and white and unspotted all these years. She had always up to this had the comfort of feeling that as far as she knew she had done right. When she had seen two ways before her equally difficult to choose between, she had remembered an early precept of Aunt John's and taken the one least pleasing to herself. Even now she had done this, but yet she had *lied*. She had lost her self-respect, disregarded the voice of conscience, broken her record. She tried to persuade herself that her honor was bound up in the implied sacredness of the confidence from Letty, but she had made no direct promise not to tell and she began little by little to feel that she had been perfectly free to speak the truth, and that she had owed no duty of this kind to Letty at all.

She worried the whole wretched question over and over again in her mind, and went about the house in such an absent and distraught way that Lucy saw her chance and took advantage to her utmost power. And Aunt John, the old backslider, seeing that Hebe was not noticing her, ate hot pastry for luncheon and cheese, too, and gave up all pretense of moral courage while she dared. "After all," she told herself as she cut another piece of Camembert, watching Hebe stealthily out of the corner of her eye, "it's *my* indigestion, and I have to bear it. And if I take a good dose of

bismuth and soda afterwards, there's no earthly reason why I shouldn't enjoy a meal for once."

And Hebe never even noticed.

Arnold came in after luncheon, and she went into the garden with him. He put the hammock up for her and made her comfortable with scarlet cushions, but Hebe was moody and worried and would not talk to him. She knew now that his point of view was an unsympathetic one. He would praise her for her loyalty if she confided in him, and she didn't wish to be reminded so forcibly again of his deplorable opinions and easy principles. What she wanted, craved for, at that moment, was someone who would scold her harshly, assure her that she had done woefully wrong, and order her to confess at once and so withdraw that terrible lie which was searing her soul. She had despairingly put the case to Aunt John early that morning.

"Aunt, if you tell a lie to prevent someone you love getting into trouble, and you feel afterwards doubtful whether you've done best for either of you, what would you do?"

"Give them both notice," said her aunt sharply. "I will, too. What have they been doing now? Don't keep anything from me, Hebe."

"It's not the servants," said poor Hebe sadly. "It's just an abstract case."

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, we all know what it means when people suddenly rouse themselves out of the blues to put abstract cases," said Aunt John, with a sigh of relief. "But you'll have to be more open with me, my dear, if I'm to give you my advice. If you've been finding out something about poor Arnold and are trying to shield him, I won't interfere."

"It's not Arnold," Hebe cried hotly. "Everyone rushes at once to the conclusion that it's Arnold! It's most annoying! He's not the only person in the world who's not perfect, I suppose. Never mind, aunt; it doesn't matter."

"If you've been saying something that isn't exactly true," Aunt John

said, with a twinkle in her eye, "I'm not sure that it isn't bound to be for the best. I sometimes think I've brought you up rather too well, my dear. And a little human weakness has a softening influence. It's better to tell a lie than to betray a secret, of course. You can't save your own soul at the expense of other people's happiness, can you?"

"But suppose you aren't sure of the happiness?"

Aunt John's eyes wandered to her novel and her interest waned.

"Happiness is the one thing you can be sure of," she said vaguely. "You can always be sure you won't get it."

And in the afternoon Hebe swung herself in her hammock and told herself that the whole world was against her, while Arnold lay on his back in the grass and played with Selim, who had settled, heavily purring, on his chest. Hebe grew suddenly exasperated at the sight.

"I sometimes wish you weren't quite so fond of cats, Arnold," she cried sharply. "It isn't a manly taste."

"I'm not a manly man," said he lazily. "I'm an idle hulk. You've often told me so."

He lifted himself to his elbow and looked at the girl's pale face, at her slender figure in the cool, pale, linen dress, leaning back against the scarlet cushions, and then at the little brown shoe which touched the ground lightly near his elbow every time the hammock swung forward. He noticed with some anxiety how tired and worried she looked, and he guessed the cause pretty accurately. He understood Hebe very well indeed.

"Last night," he said slowly, with his eyes on a patch of blue sky between the trees, "Schlesinger asked you something about Miss Dill, didn't he?"

Hebe was silent.

"I thought so. You shielded her at the expense of your own honor—what you *consider* your own honor—and now you're worrying about it. Hebe dear, don't you see that you did the only possible, the only decent thing?"

"You mustn't call me 'dear,'" Hebe

said curtly, without looking at him. "I've told you that before."

"It's always on the tip of my tongue," he said humbly, "and it slips off without my noticing it. But don't worry yourself about this. I can't bear to see you look so worried. And it wouldn't have been a particularly honorable thing to betray a friend now, would it? Look the thing in the face."

Hebe looked down at him sullenly as he lay there, stretched out on the grass, idle, irreligious, indifferent—a failure in every sense of the word as she knew it, the type of what she most disapproved of and despised, and then swung herself suddenly out of the hammock.

"You're a pagan," she said fiercely. "You glory in the fact that you have no principles of any kind. How can I take your word on a question of honor? You don't know the difference between right and wrong. You often say so. It's enough—it's quite enough for me to be sure I've done *wrong* if you tell me I've done right. I'm going in, Arnold. Please don't come in with me. You and aunt and the vicar are all alike. Aunt used to be different, but she's changed terribly. I can't get help from anyone. And if I go on with this deceit now I shall be as bad as any of you. It's horrible—horrible! I'd rather die than be dragged down to your level."

Arnold jumped up and confronted her with distressed eyes.

"I beg your pardon, Hebe," he said gravely. "I have no right, as you say, to advise you or anyone. I am very sorry that I tried to ease your mind. I might have known I should only make things a thousand times harder for you. Good-bye, then."

He lifted his hat and walked away, but in spite of his humble words and crushed mien he was really a little cheered. Like Aunt John, he was almost glad to see Hebe conscious of human weakness and full of self-reproach, for she was a hard judge sometimes. If she was to grieve *much* over her own sins she might perhaps have her eyes and ears dulled to the sins of

others, and would have less time or inclination to grieve over them. He was sorry to see her so miserable, but he couldn't help feeling that it might turn out in the end to be all for the best.

Poor Hebe wandered disconsolately up and down the house, unable to settle down to sew or read. Since she had left school two years ago she had regularly kept up her music, and read French and German so many hours a day. But today her mind wandered first to Letty and then to Schlesinger—to Arnold and back to Letty again. How hard it was—how cruelly hard and difficult life was, when the only people you really loved were so lost to all sense of what was right!

After dinner she grew more restless still. And then suddenly a resolve to lay this overwhelming burden on the shoulders of Letty, who so strongly deserved it, grew and strengthened in her heart. She looked at the clock. Ten, already. It was only a few minutes' run across the park to the Hall. Primrose had kindly begged her to come as often as she could, whenever she could. It was a strange hour, certainly, but perhaps she could see Letty alone. Oh, if she only could see Letty alone!

She slipped a cloak over her light dress, and stepped through the open window. The servants had gone to bed, and she had settled Aunt John with her reading-lamp and novel, and Selim curled up on the foot of her bed. Hebe was left to lock up, as usual, and no one would notice her absence. Ten minutes' conversation with Letty would relieve her mind and perhaps allow her to sleep. She must certainly see Letty at once. She slipped across the lawn and opened the wide wooden gate into the road, then hesitated. Ten o'clock. It would be nearly midnight perhaps when she got home. She would be leaving the house unprotected all that time, and how queer they would all think it of her at the Hall.

"It's not a nice thing for a girl to do," Hebe said, with a sigh, as she went conscientiously back to the house and locked up for the night. The thought

that it was the kind of thing Letty herself would have done without hesitation, if she had wanted to do it half as badly as Hebe did, deterred her, perhaps, and she gave it up. She loved Letty, but she deeply, deeply disapproved of her.

And the next day, being a damp and drizzling one, she hurried over her duties in the house. Letty wouldn't be motoring or driving on a day like this. She would go up directly after luncheon and try to see her. And when Mrs. Hending Folsoy, the duenna cousin, told her that the girls had vanished and that she was afraid they must have gone out somewhere after all, as it had cleared up so nicely, she could have cried with disappointment. But luck favored her, for outside the drawing-room door she caught Ambrosine, Philippa Van Rooy's maid, and asked her where her mistress was.

Ambrosine hesitated.

"I sink she is wiz Lady Preemrose," she said.

"And Miss Dill?"

"Mees Dill also. Zey are, I zink—zey rest in Lady Preemrose's room."

"I'll go up, if I may," Hebe said in relieved tones.

She had always been very much at home here, while Primrose was at the Hall, and she went straight up to her sitting-room. The French maid looked after her in some perplexity, moved forward almost as if to stop her, then went on her way with a little shrug.

Hebe knocked at the door and waited. She heard a hasty exclamation from Lady Primrose; then:

"Who is it? You, Ambrosine?" from Mrs. Van Rooy.

"It's I," said Hebe sharply. "Hebe Nunn." She tried the door, but it was locked. She heard Letty say, with a laugh:

"Let her in, Primrose. She's all right. And you've made a misdeal. Do deal more carefully."

Bridge, of course. Primrose's pink-and-white sitting-room, as rosy as herself and very full of soft cushions and little comforts of every kind, bore a reckless air. The four girls were ob-

viously intent on the game; there was a side-table close to Primrose's elbow with a disorder of tea and coffee and cigarettes, and Letty, anxiously sorting her cards, looked up for a moment to smile at her friend.

"Sit down, Hebe, do, there's a good child, and don't talk to us. Be a dear little mouse for ten minutes."

Hebe sat down in a low chair by the open window and watched them angrily. She watched Letty's pale, eager face and excited eyes, Miss Mendelssohn's dark, composed assurance, Philippa Van Rooy's quick movements and loud, shrill voice, and Primrose's anxious, rosy face and clumsy figure.

Primrose and Letty were playing together and Letty had been losing again. The luck which she had assured Hebe must turn soon had not turned yet, and there was a look in her eyes which frightened her friend.

Miss Mendelssohn declared, "No trumps." Letty laughed as she sorted her cards. The luck did seem to have turned a little.

"I'll double," she said. "Come and sit by me, Hebe, and be a nice little mascotte."

Hebe didn't move, however, and Letty was too engrossed in the game to notice it. She had nine clubs—ace, king, queen and six little ones. A pretty safe thing, she felt, for it was her lead. Philippa redoubled; Letty recklessly doubled again. Philippa laid down the dummy hand.

Poor Letty! She gave a little gasp, for the other four clubs were all there, and every other suit safe. Letty could only make her three leading cards, and then, of course, lost her lead. Her remaining clubs were wasted, and Violet, taking advantage of a lucky finesse, was able to make the remaining tricks. She smiled as she made up the score.

"Four above book," said she amiably. "Three hundred and eighty-four points in this hand alone—thirty by aces. Fifty-one pounds, fifteen shillings, Letty. Thank you, my dear."

Hebe gasped, and came forward.

"You're not playing half-crown points!" she said quickly.

"Why not?" Primrose looked up, smiling. These losses didn't mean much to her, for she had an indulgent father who would pay dressmakers' bills forever without asking awkward questions.

Letty had leaned back in her chair, very pale, but still smiling a little.

"We might as well have another rubber," she said gaily. "It's only four o'clock."

"No," said Hebe sharply. There was a hard, red spot on each cheek. "Don't play any more, please, Letty. I wanted to speak to you, if I might, about something very particular. Don't—please don't play any more now."

Miss Mendelssohn lit a cigarette. Philippa followed her example. Letty held out a delicate, helpless-looking little hand for the silver box.

"Won't it do after tea, Hebe?" she asked, with her pretty, appealing smile. "We must have another rubber, you see. I've got a tremendous lot of money to win back again, dear."

"Oh!" Hebe cried fiercely. "You aren't going to win back any money. You're only going to lose more—that's what *you're* going to do. You aren't good enough—you and Primrose, for Miss Van Rooy and Miss Mendelssohn."

Phil brought her tilting chair down with a crash. Violet looked at Letty in amazement. Primrose flushed. She was quite satisfied with her own play; if the cards were against her, it wasn't her fault. There was a strained silence in the room. Letty broke it with a laugh.

"You're not very complimentary to any of us, Hebe. But we don't always have the wretched luck we've had today, do we, Primrose?"

Primrose sighed with relief.

"No," she said, "of course not. Besides, we change partners, Hebe. We take it in turns, you see. We must have another rubber, Phil, before we go down to tea."

Hebe went back to her place by the window and watched them no more.

Her eyes were fixed on the woods beyond the canal which bordered the park. She sat waiting, lost in thought, till a little cry from Letty brought her back to her senses.

Letty had made hearts on a fair hand. Miss Mendelssohn had doubled them and then Primrose laid down her cards without a trump or a court card. Letty's face was whiter than ever and her eyes looked strained and anxious. All the love and pity in Hebe's heart surged up suddenly and overwhelmed her. She sprang forward and lost control of her temper altogether. With a quick movement she took the cards out of Letty's hand and threw them down to dummy, and shuffled them rapidly together.

"You sha'n't play any more!" she cried. "You sha'n't play any more! It's wicked of you all to let her play. Primrose, if you don't stop, I'll go down and tell Lord Wintergrey myself. It isn't fair—oh, indeed, indeed it isn't fair!"

V

AUNT JOHN missed Hebe quite pleasantly at tea-time, because she was able for once to eat, to her heart's content, the hot buttered crumpets which were always so bad for her, and she gave Selim as much cream as he liked; so much, indeed, that he left half of it for Lucy to kick over when she took the tray down. But afterward Aunt John began to fidget and worry mildly and wish the girl back. She lost her spectacles, for one thing, and then the book she was reading, and Lucy was impertinent to her twice with the kind of impertinence it is almost impossible to deal with adequately. She felt helpless and lost and wondered uneasily why Hebe was so unkind as to stay away from her all this time. She couldn't be staying to dinner in a light morning frock and walking shoes. It was impossible. Yet seven o'clock came and no Hebe. What pleasure was there, after all, in eating forbidden fruit if no one knew and only she her-

self suffered for it? She discovered that the pleasure had lain chiefly in her defiance of Hebe and delight in her grave, disapproving young face. She kept strictly and drearily to the rules laid down for her by her niece, and felt none of the usual glow of virtue in the sacrifice.

Arnold came in for the evening and seemed very much surprised.

"I expect Letty Dill has dressed her up in some of her extravagant frocks," Aunt John said, much reassured by his friendly sympathy. "She always wanted to at Christmas, but Hebe never would hear of it. There was a barbaric-looking Eastern garment of golden, flimsy, shining stuff with sparkling embroidery that she brought down one night because it was a pity to waste it on a brown-haired, English-looking thing, she said. She said Hebe was so dark that it was an inspiration of the gods to make her wear it. Perhaps Hebe has given in at last to her persuading. She certainly has a way with her."

"Shall I go up and see?" Arnold asked. "Shall I say you have sent me to bring Hebe home—that you are anxious about her?"

"Yes," said Aunt John promptly. "Do, there's a good boy. Do go up for her. It's nearly half-past ten now. But tell her to come in quietly, for I mustn't lose my rest on any account. Tell her to come in like a mouse and lock up carefully."

An hour later, however, Arnold found her still up, anxiously waiting. She had suddenly grown fidgety at the idea of the house being left unprotected at that hour, she said, and had kept both of the servants up. When Arnold came in alone she stared at him in amazement and much alarm.

"Hebe wasn't there," he said, with a disappointed little laugh. "She called in the afternoon and found everybody out, and went away again. She's gone to see someone else, I suppose. I wonder why she is so late. It isn't like her, is it?"

"Did Letty Dill say whether she

had seen Hebe?" Aunt John demanded sharply.

"She'd gone to bed," Arnold said. "And Lady Primrose and the other girls, too. I only saw Mrs. Folsoy, and the old professor, and Lord Wintergrey. He said that Lady Primrose and the others had come down for a week's rest and that they've been religiously carrying out her plan and going to bed early every night. I wonder where Hebe *can* be. Do you suppose she's gone to visit the undeserving sick, or any other infernal philanthropic tomfoolery of that sort?"

"No," said Aunt John firmly. "Hebe's been too worried about some trouble of her own today to have thought of such a thing. And for an earnest, Christian young woman she's been most horribly cross. She's gone to Little Merriton, I expect, to see the Johnstones. But it's time she was in, and I don't like to think of that long, lonely walk over the fields for her. Hebe has been quite demoralized since the Hall party came. It was very much the same at Christmas, but the disease is growing upon her. It's Letty Dill's influence, I'm afraid. And I'm afraid I've encouraged that. I thought at the time that the influence of such a thorough little worldling might do Hebe good. But now I'm not quite so sure."

Arnold smiled affectionately. He and Aunt John were very fond of each other and in perfect sympathy.

"To tell the truth, my dear boy," she admitted, "I have brought that child up much too closely in the way she should go, and now that I have the sense to see that it's a way that's open to question she's letting the treatment rebound on me in a way I don't always find it easy to bear gracefully. But I don't like to see her worried and nervous and upset in this way, and I wish with all my heart that they'd pack their trunks and go whizzing back to Vanity Fair again. What do *you* think of Letty Dill?"

"I?" Arnold asked. "Oh, I think she's very pretty and quite as charming as any young woman ought to be. And

she's not nearly so much of a strayed sheep as poor little Hebe supposes. She's certainly quite delightful—in her way. But I'm afraid," he laughed ruefully, "I'm afraid I find it difficult, in these days, Mrs. John, to appreciate any way but Hebe's. And it's an uncommonly straight and narrow one and all that sort of thing, for an out-and-out backslider to follow, don't you see?"

Aunt John laughed heartily and settled herself comfortably in her chair.

"She'll get over it," she said wisely. "But I wish she'd come in."

Arnold sat with her until past twelve, and although he did his best to reassure her, she wasn't at all easy, and began to wonder if Hebe in her distraught frame of mind could have forgotten her aunt's comforts sufficiently to allow herself to be persuaded to stay the night at Little Merriton. At a quarter to one, after an hour's violent yawning, she said sleepily that she would give it up and go to bed. And it was then that Arnold, who was much the more anxious of the two, caught the sound of a quick, light footfall, of a rustling skirt crossing the lawn. Hebe slipped in through the open window as he rose. Her face was as white as a sheet, her eyes red and swollen, and she wore no wrap over her thin blue muslin dress. She shivered as her aunt spoke to her.

"At the Hall," she said. "Of course. Didn't you guess I'd been at the Hall? No, it can't be as late as that. And you waited up for me, auntie dear? I *am* so sorry. It was *horrid* of me—I'm terribly tired."

Arnold said good night and went quickly away. There must be some explanation, of course, but that one first look at Hebe's wretched face had made him anxious only to spare her anything more. Poor child, what a dreadful, dreadful expression for a girl of twenty! If only Hebe wouldn't take things so horribly seriously. Why did she make such mountains out of all those silly little mole-hills?

But he was very anxious and slept badly. The thought of Hebe involved in all these worries and troubles while

he was compelled to stand by and watch, quite powerless to help her, was not pleasing to him.

"I was with the girls," Hebe said sullenly, in answer to her aunt's questions. "Arnold had no business to go. I have been in Primrose's own rooms."

And that was all she said.

Mechanically and methodically she settled her aunt for the night and then crept away to her own room, pulled up the blind and sank upon the old, beaded, tapestried *prie-dieu* by the window to stare with unseeing eyes at the still Midsummer beauty of the moonlit garden. And she was almost terrified to find out how completely all her love and pity for Letty seemed to have vanished. A dull, hot hatred smoldered now in their place and strengthened her desire for revenge. She had been ignored, scorned, insulted, and worst of all, forgotten. And yesterday she had loved Letty better—well, almost better than anything in the world. Her heart now was full of everything she had most despised. She had gloried in her freedom from these evil passions, but they completely possessed her now, and though they frightened her she found herself encouraging and strengthening them rather than trampling upon them as she ought to have done.

She was tired, and she undressed hurriedly and flung herself into bed without reading her accustomed chapter, without saying her accustomed prayers for the doomed souls of Arnold and Letty and Aunt John and all the other sinners of the world heaped together.

And the thought which filled her brain turned to a firm resolve before she went to sleep, and slipped to and fro in changing forms all night through her feverish dreams.

She awoke to find that it had overpowered everything else, and directly after breakfast she wrote a little note to Schlesinger and posted it at once, so that he should get it in the early afternoon. Then she told herself fiercely how glad she was that the thing was done, that all her boats were burnt.

Schlesinger had arranged to take Letty out in his car, and was very much surprised when he read the note; but Hebe's unsteady writing and anxiously-worded request made him quickly change his plans, and Letty asked no questions, for *she* had had other plans, too—and Schlesinger was often in an awkward mood in those days, full of awkward questions.

DEAR MR. SCHLESINGER:

I must see you at once, on *particularly* important business. It's about the question you asked me the other night. It has been weighing on my mind ever since. And please do come if you can. I shall be alone this afternoon, but please don't come up to the house because of Aunt John. You will find me in the garden by the duck-pond. Believe me,

Yours sincerely,
HEBE NUNN.

Schlesinger was too unhappy about Letty to be as amused by this bold request as he might have been, and he at once decided to go down and look for that duck-pond in Aunt John's garden, and see what Hebe Nunn had to say. What was the good of asking questions of Letty, he thought bitterly, when she lied to him every day as she did? He would take advantage at once of Hebe's curious revulsion of feeling.

He strolled around the garden, and in time found the little round pond, and Hebe sitting on the stone edge of it throwing bits of biscuit to her white Aylesburys. She rose hastily as she saw him. Her black hair was disheveled, and he thought she looked as if she had been crying, and not at all pretty.

"Poor child," he thought, with a sigh, "how fond she is—how fond everyone is of Letty!"

He took her hand kindly, and looked at her with searching, friendly eyes.

"I guess you're worrying yourself considerably about something," he said. "It's very good of you to take any notice of my impertinent questions, anyhow."

Hebe drew her hand away, and unclasped and clasped her fingers nervously.

"You asked me the other night," she

began in a mechanical voice, "whether I thought Letty played bridge still."

Schlesinger said nothing. She sat down once more on the low stone wall, and he seated himself beside her.

"I lied to you!" she cried suddenly. "I've never told a lie before, not since I knew what a lie meant, and I *did* lie the other night, for Letty's sake. I thought it was best for her."

"But you were only being loyal to your friend," Schlesinger said gently. "Of course I ought to have known that you would feel obliged to be loyal to your friend."

Hebe went on, scarce hearing him:

"I thought you would be hard on her and give her up if you knew the truth," said she wearily. "I knew Letty loved you, and I told a lie to you because I was afraid she would break her heart if she lost you."

Schlesinger reached out for a little bit of gravel from the path and threw it at the nearest duck.

"No," he said slowly. "Not break her heart. If I—if we quarreled, I don't think she would feel anything but—well, disappointment. I don't honestly think it would go deeper than that. I'm not a gay young knight-errant, Miss Nunn."

Hebe looked up at his impassive face, and guessed that he was thinking of his money—of Letty's poverty and extravagance and her love for society, and all the things she must have which only money could give her. Yet she knew that Letty really loved him better than all these things. She had known it a long time, and at Christmas had been almost jealous of him. She began to speak—then stopped. *Did* she know? *Did* Letty love him so much, after all? She lied to him, and disregarded all his wishes. Hebe had thought that Letty loved *her*, and yet now— She shivered a little. *Did* Letty love anyone but herself? she asked. Why should she defend a cause which she almost knew to be a feeble, a rotten cause? She did not defend it. She said nothing.

"I was up at the Hall yesterday afternoon," Hebe said quickly, "and

I found them all playing in Lady Primrose's room—for half-crown points. Letty lost nearly sixty pounds while I was there—and I—well, I lost my head. I begged them to stop, and they wouldn't listen to me, so I shuffled up the cards and said I would tell Lord Wintergrey if they didn't stop."

She paused suddenly, and Schlesinger, looking at her childish, earnest face and troubled eyes, laughed in spite of himself at the picture she called up.

"What did they do with you?" he asked. "I do admire your courage. It's more than I should have dared to do."

Hebe's face flamed.

"I was very wrong," she said. "I lost my temper, and it wasn't my business. They were terribly angry with me, and—" She stopped again. The humiliation of that memory was too much for her. How could she tell him? A boyish spirit of endurance and reserve prevented her from telling of an injury inflicted only upon herself.

"I told you a lie," she said. "It has been nearly killing me to think of that lie. They play all the time, afternoon and evening. They leave the drawing-room at eleven and play in Primrose's rooms till two or three in the morning. Letty has lost three hundred pounds since she came here, and she hasn't been here five days yet. They only *pretended* to come for a rest. The gambling fever has them in its deadly grip, and they came for nothing else in the world. And it's *killing* Letty. Her mother was phthisical and Letty is racking herself out so that another cold like the one she had in February will be enough to awake the disease in her, for Aunt John said so, and kill her. Mr. Schlesinger—if you love her, *do* please marry her and take her away from everything."

Hebe's desire for revenge had suddenly died in the pathetic vision of the wasting Letty she had herself called up. All her love came back with a rush. But as she glanced timidly at Schlesinger she saw that his mouth was hard, his lips stern.

"I can't save her," he said. "I can't do anything for her, except—I

have no influence over Letty at all, you see. She disregards my wishes. My word has no weight with her."

Hebe's eyes shone, then filled with fresh tears. Her mouth grew tender. Letty's face as she said, "I'm afraid I worship him!" came back to her. She would plead her cause now with a whole heart.

"If you knew!" she began hoarsely. "She is wild about you—she'll break her heart if——"

"Hush!" Schlesinger stopped her harshly. "There *is* Letty," he said. "But she hasn't seen me. I'll go now—I can get out round the other side of the garden, can't I? Thank you very much for this——"

Letty, in something green and fresh and pretty, with a hat full of primroses, caught sight of Hebe from the other side of the orchard and waved to her enthusiastically.

VI

WITH lagging steps Hebe crossed the orchard to meet her. She would rather have met a dragon with steel-tipped claws and fiery breath than Letty at that moment. Letty felt differently, it seemed, for she ran when she got a little nearer, her cheeks rosy, her eyes shining with excitement, her pretty dress—Letty was always so careless with her clothes—trailing through the grass. She was a girl with the grace of Spring and now, with her smiling face and delicate, exquisitely fresh color, was a sight for the gods, if they still have eyes to see.

"Hebe dear," she cried as she came up, panting a little, "I've come to apologize. I shall never, never forgive myself. I ought to go down on my bended knees and beg you to forgive me, I know, but you wouldn't like it if I spoiled my frock in the damp and dusty grass, would you?"

Hebe was silent, and she tried to keep her lips in that firm, hard line which always meant with her a righteously unforgiving heart.

"I was mad," Letty said ruefully, dropping the hands Hebe was so ob-

viciously disregarding. "I must certainly have been mad. We all were. You see, it was such a very important moment. There was really too much at stake for—for playfulness of that kind. You oughtn't, you really ought not to have interfered with us just then. But it was unpardonable of us, of course, no matter what you'd done," she added hastily, dropping her light tone at the sight of Hebe's somber eyes. "The others are as sorry as I am and I shall never forgive myself—I'm sure I sha'n't."

"And I shall never forgive you," Hebe said sullenly. Letty's light tone had helped to harden her heart.

"Oh!" Letty's eyes clouded. She had never seen Hebe like this before. She went slowly up to the stump of a tree a little further on and sat down. Her bright face suddenly became the picture of woe. She unpinned her little primrose-filled hat and tossed it recklessly into the grass, then leaned her dejected head upon her hands, her elbows on her knees. "Don't be cruel to me, Hebe," she said at last in a quiet, miserable, utterly changed voice. "Don't be hard with me today."

"Cruel?" Hebe cried. "Hard! How can you, how dare you be so silly! How dare you say I'm cruel! To insult me as you did yesterday! to forget me all those terrible hours! to leave me to be tortured by rats—rats!—and all kinds of horrors! to carry me out of the room as if I had been a naughty child and lock me up in that dusty, dreadful old attic and then to go away and forget me! How dare you, how dare you say I'm cruel and hard!"

Letty broke into an irrepressible little laugh and suddenly stopped to dab at her eyes with an inadequate and elegant handkerchief.

"You looked so funny," she said. "You really were more like a naughty little boy than anything else. And weren't Violet and Primrose strong to carry you all that way—kicking, too? But I hated their doing it. You heard me tell them that I hated it? You heard me tell them not to? You must have heard me tell them. And

then we played again and I lost—I lost dreadfully in the evening, too, and it drove everything else out of my head. And when I did remember, I threw my cards down—it was my deal and a good heart hand, too—and I ran straight up and unlocked the door—you know I did. And I wanted to get you some supper. Ambrosine would have managed that easily for us, and if you did run home all faint and cold and dusty as you were, it was entirely your own fault, wasn't it?"

Hebe was speechless.

Letty sat staring down at the grass for a few minutes, her face very grave again, and presently she glanced up with pleading childish eyes and trembling lips.

"Scold me," she said. "I'm used to scoldings, but don't look like that. I can't bear it; I never could bear dignified silence. Hebe—Hebe dear——"

She laid her little delicate hand on the skirt of the girl's dress and then ventured timidly to stroke the arm hanging by Hebe's side. But still Hebe stood rigidly silent, her lips firmly pressed together. It was perhaps the memory of that lie she had been made to tell which kept her firm, not the memory of the betrayed confidence or the injury she had suffered.

Letty began to speak, but her voice broke and she hid her face again.

"I've had such a happy morning, Hebe," she said presently; "the kind of morning one will remember when one has nearly forgotten what it is like to be happy. Hardy took me out in his motor and he was so nice to me. He—he didn't ask any awkward questions, and it was like—almost like the first day we were engaged, when I made all the tiresome promises I've been obliged to break since. You—you aren't going to spoil my happy day for me, are you? I feel sometimes—very often now—as if there wouldn't be many more for me."

But Hebe's pride kept the door to her heart fast locked and it was the first time that Letty had failed to find the key. But presently her eyes, which she had kept steadily turned away, wavered and fell upon Letty's bowed head

and she heard a little sobbing breath. Letty was crying.

Hebe's lips trembled—the rigid line broke—her mouth softened to a beautiful tender curve, but Letty didn't see that. She went on quietly sobbing.

"Letty," Hebe said gently, "I didn't tell you what I came up to ask you yesterday. I came to ask you to tell Mr. Schlesinger the whole truth. I—I wanted to tell you that I am sure there will never be any happiness for you if you deceive him like this. He loves you very much, and I think if I were you I should tell him everything."

Letty shivered.

"Don't!" she said in a low voice. "He's the kind of man who thinks everything of honor and truth and that sort of thing—everything. He would never forgive me if he knew I lied to him—never. And my broken promise—why, even if he forgave me I know the memory of my broken promise would stand between us always and kill, just kill our happiness."

Hebe, suddenly tongue-tied by the thought of the interview she had just held with Schlesinger, said no more. Letty rose suddenly and laid her wet face against her friend's shoulder.

"He told me," she said, "oh, he told me everything this morning. He apologized for having doubted me and for appealing to you."

"What!" Hebe cried sharply.

"Yes," said Letty simply, "and I do thank you, dear, with all my heart, for your loyalty to me. I know what it must have meant to you, Hebe, to lie for my sake."

What it had meant for her! What did it mean to Hebe now? She covered her face with her hands and sank down on her knees in the grass without saying a word.

"If you had betrayed me," Letty went on sadly, "it would have killed me, for I am sure he would never have forgiven me."

"Nonsense!" said Hebe, looking up sharply with fierce eyes. "Of course he would forgive you. And even if he wouldn't, I don't know how you can sleep at night for thinking of it. The

truth must out. It always does. Those girls—Primrose isn't very discreet, I know—and that chatterbox of a sister of his—"

"It's only in novels and plays that the truth always outs," Letty cried sharply. "Not in real life. And Primrose daren't, because of her father. And Phil's almost as much afraid of Hardy as I am. Her allowance depends entirely on pleasing him, you see."

"There's the maid—Ambrosine. I should never trust a Frenchwoman out of sight."

"Ambrosine's devoted to Phil, and you're very bigoted if you feel like that because she's not English. Besides, we all give her heaps of valuable presents. I'm not afraid of her. Oh, Hebe, it was noble of you to stand by me as you did. Think what a morning I might have had; and instead, Hardy was so dear, and he *apologized*. That was awful. He apologized for having doubted my word. If only—oh, if only that dreadful money was paid!"

"How much do you owe altogether?"

"More than a thousand pounds!"

"Letty!"

"If I could have a bit of luck," the girl cried hysterically; "if I only had average luck. But instead of winning I go on losing, and besides Madame Ethelrose there are all my bridge debts and only three hundred pounds coming to me to pay them with before Easter. And that's mortgaged up to the hilt as well. Primrose won't worry me. But Phil's hard up now; she daren't go beyond her allowance again, or Hardy would want to know why and all the particulars. He makes her show her bills. And Violet Mendelssohn—well, she's a Jewess, you see. I must pay Violet what I owe her at once. And I lose, and lose, and lose."

Her voice broke again; then suddenly she looked up at Hebe with a wintry smile. Her tumbled brown hair lay on her forehead in little damp rings, her cheeks were painted by her excitement a most exquisite rose, her blue eyes were misty with tears. She looked so young, so pleading, so dear!

"Lucky at cards, unlucky in love. I

can't have both," she said mournfully. She put her arm round Hebe's shoulders and drew her close up to her, so that the girl's dark head almost touched her cheek.

"Hebe," she said, "you're so very young—almost a little girl, aren't you, although you are so terribly wise? You don't know what love is yet, do you, dear? Perhaps—I don't know—perhaps it is better *not* to know. There is always such a heavy, heavy price to pay in sorrow for such a short day of happiness. And I've had such a happy morning. I'm afraid of what I shall have to pay for it. I've never had such a happy morning in all my life. You see I was nervous and afraid of him, and afraid, too, of what he would say to me. And then—I've never seen Hardy so gentle and so—so different. And I owe it all to you."

She kissed Hebe with a loving, clinging, tender kiss that seemed to go piercing through like a wicked little dagger to the girl's heart.

"You said," she cried harshly, trying to drag herself away, "you said you couldn't give up your life as it is now—your insane gambling, your paltry bridge, for *him*. How can you call that love? If you love a person, they ought to come before everything else in the world. And how can you bear to deceive him so, if you love him like this?"

Letty grew paler; her lips trembled.

"I was reckless the night I told you that. And angry with him because he suspected me. And it wasn't true. If only I can get clear before Easter—if only I can wipe it all out and go to him free from debt and with no secrets——"

"Shall you confess *then*?"

Letty opened her eyes wider.

"Why, there wouldn't be any good in confessing then," said she naively. "The past would be dead and the future mine to make it what I wished."

A sudden overwhelming temptation to tell her the whole truth seized Hebe. She would be angry, crushed, terrified, but she would be obliged to *speak* to Schlesinger about it and perhaps all would still be well. She opened her

lips to speak, but Letty interrupted her and the impulse died away.

"I shall always be glad I trusted you," she said.

Hebe dragged herself away and rose to her feet. She could bear no more.

"The grass is damp," she said. "You've spoilt the bottom of an entirely new dress, Letty. And I must go in now, at once, to give aunt her tea."

Letty laughed.

"And me, too, I hope," said she. "You've forgiven me, Hebe, haven't you, for last night? The hatchet is buried between us forever, isn't it? We'll let the old thing rust now in its earthy bed, won't we?"

She caught Hebe's hand and dragged her back to her side to hold her arm fast.

"Do let's be friends," she said childishly.

Hebe suddenly turned and fiercely kissed her, but could not speak. They went in without another word.

Aunt John in her long drab drawing-room was entertaining the vicar, and pointing out the dead roses in the jars and pots. They were a disgrace, she said. And so they were. Hebe might at least have thrown them away now that they were dead. But Hebe had a bee in her bonnet today.

"The whole village," said the vicar pleasantly, "has bees in its bonnets today. It's stark, staring mad. The Wakes are here in full blast, and every man, woman and child is riding hobby-horses and shying at cocoanuts to the tune of 'We Parted by the Shore.' And I'm ashamed to confess, Mrs. John, that the shepherd would join his roistering flock for twopence."

"I'll give you twopence," Letty cried joyfully, "and you shall come with us and treat me to a swing boat and an Ocean Wave. I do *hope* they've got an Ocean Wave. We're all going tonight, Primrose and Violet and Philippa and all the men—even the dear old professor—and we're going to teach the young idea how to shoot. I'm a dead shot at a shooting-gallery—didn't you know? Will you come, Hebe? Do come. You've no idea

what a glorious invention a razzle-dazzle is."

Hebe was gloomily pouring out the tea and hardly noticed Letty's happy chatter, except to wonder resentfully how she could forget so soon.

"Hardy doesn't quite like it," the girl went on. "But he'll enjoy it when he's there. And there won't be any horrid people—Parkes told me so himself—because it's a Thursday and the wages night is Friday. They haven't anything left to buy beer with by Thursday, so it will be like a Young Men's Christian Association, or Endeavor, or whatever they call it, for good behavior. We shall have a really ripping time."

"Teresa's going," Aunt John said. "And she's doing her best to persuade Lucy. Lucy says she doesn't know that her mother would quite like it. But I dare say she's only trying to aggravate cook. They're a pretty pair."

"Teresa's nearly seventy." Hebe tried to smile as she made the remark. "And she says Lucy has no spirit. 'Girls aren't what they were,' she says, and really, if she's a specimen——"

"Would you like to go?" Aunt John turned suddenly to her niece with a twinkling eye. "If Arnold will take care of you, you might certainly go. It will cheer you up a little, my dear—make you feel quite young again. I wish my own legs were a few years younger."

Hebe looked up, amazed.

"Why—you've never, never let me go to the Wakes, aunt, in all my life; even when I was quite a little girl, you wouldn't let nurse take me. You said, you've always said, that no young gentlewoman would allow herself to be seen in such a racket and hullabaloo. You know you have."

Aunt John smiled at this *réchauffée* of her bygone sentiments with forgiving tolerance, but her smile enraged the girl still more.

"How you do change!" Hebe cried irritably. "I wish you wouldn't change so. I—I don't know where I am sometimes when you knock down

one landmark after another. I don't know what to go by, sometimes."

Aunt John stroked Selim with dignity. She felt uncomfortable.

"Your manner, my dear," she said, "is hardly respectful."

The vicar was studying Hebe's flushed, angry face carefully. He looked from her to Letty, who was curled up in the sunny window-seat, shamelessly trying to coax Selim from his mistress with a bribery of bread and butter dipped in cream.

"We've all got to change, Hebe," he said quietly. "We must move with the times, my dear, move with the times. Only old dead stumps and frumps stay in the same place without spreading their roots or passing on. And sometimes"—he glanced wickedly at Letty Dill out of the corner of his eyes—"sometimes I'm almost afraid that we've drifted into an age of backsliders. You mustn't expect Mrs. John to treat you like a Middle-Victorian aunt now. It can't be done. And I assure you you wouldn't like it much if she did. It's an age of tolerance and broad-minded eye-shutting. Yet it's quite a comfortable age, for all that. I believe—I really believe that you're the only one of my flock (the flock includes the shepherd, of course) who can't at times be accused of the crime."

"What crime?" Letty had been too much engrossed in Selim to listen.

"Why, backsliding," said he, with a cheerful smile.

Hebe put down the teapot and went quietly out of the room. She could bear no more.

VII

"I WANT to have a little serious conversation with you," said Aunt John, with a noticeable effort to brace herself to an unpleasant necessity. "I can see that you are worrying about something, and it occurs to me that you may be worrying about Arnold."

"I'm doing nothing of the kind," said Hebe sharply. "People seem to think that poor Arnold is the only

worry in the world. How can you think I should make myself so miserable about anything so absurd?"

"He isn't absurd," her aunt said calmly. "And if you aren't miserable about him now, you may very soon have cause to be if you don't pull yourself together to face the facts. He's a very nice, obliging, respectful and devoted young man—devoted to me as well as to you. I should never have dreamed that a girl with such an irreproachable bringing-up as yours has been could demean herself to play fast and loose with any young man as you are doing with him."

"Aunt John!" Hebe rose from her seat beside the window in indignant protest.

"Sit down," said her aunt, "and listen quietly to me. I don't often have a chance to speak. Arnold has been in love with you in the most bare-faced way for more than a year."

"I can't help that," the girl began indignantly. "If he's so——"

"That's as it may be," said Aunt John with meaning, "but as an unprejudiced looker-on——"

"You know I never gave him any encouragement. I have always been most cold."

Hebe grew scarlet with annoyance, for, indeed, she considered that her whole behavior to Arnold had been beyond reproach.

"There's encouragement and there's encouragement," her aunt pursued calmly. "And there's also what the vulgar call leading on. I'm not going to make any remarks about the way he's been taking you up the river, and gardening for you, and dropping in to see—me morning, noon and night. We'll keep to the point, now we've got there. He wants to marry you, Hebe. *How many times has he asked you to marry him?*"

"Seven *definite* times," Hebe said precisely, "and I haven't counted the others."

"Do you dislike him?"

Hebe was silent.

"Do you dislike him?"

"No, Aunt John." Her voice was

low and not very steady. Aunt John smiled at Selim.

"Do you like him?"

"You know we all like Arnold," the girl cried bitterly. "That's the worst of it. You can't help liking him—in spite of——"

"In spite of his depraved habits and low moral tone?" Aunt John asked amiably. "Ah, poor boy! Poor, poor boy!"

"Poor fiddlesticks!" Hebe cried shortly. "I never said his habits were depraved. I never said they were anything. They *aren't* anything. And he's quite happy. It's—it's not fair of you, Aunt John, to pity him as you do. You know perfectly well he's as happy—as happy as anything."

"Well, I'm glad he's so happy," her aunt remarked with meaning. "Do you return his affection, then, Hebe?"

Hebe was silent and Aunt John spared her.

"Do you mean to marry him?" she asked instead, "because all this gardening and boating and daisy-chain business is only leading up to a moment when you will *have* to say 'Yes' or 'No.'"

"How can I?" Hebe demanded fiercely. "Look at him."

Aunt John murmured that it was always a pleasure, but Hebe disregarded her fiercely.

"An idle, unprincipled, good-for-nothing pagan, careless——"

"Rubbish!" said her aunt firmly. "He's not nearly as idle as half the young men-about-town."

"He soon will be," her aunt pursued with meaning, "if *you* aren't more amiable. And it's all the more to his credit that he isn't, for he could dissipate with the best of 'em if he wished. Goodness, child," she went on sharply, "London's full of people who want him to dine, and dance, and play about with them. And instead of that he stays down here and reads dull and soul-destroying books to please you. It isn't every young man with Arnold's looks and charming ways who'd spend all these months in a dull vicarage for the sake of playing buttercups-and-

daisies with an intolerant, narrow-minded, self-righteous little 'school-girl.'

"I'm *not* self-righteous!" Hebe cried furiously. "How can you, aunt, oh, how can you say I'm anything so norrid? You know you taught me yourself how idle people never prosper, and how we never get back our wasted hours, and youth, and all that sort of thing. If it's all wrong, why—oh, why did you teach me that it was so right? Why did you tell me to go to the ant, thou sluggard, when I was a poor little pig-tailed, trustful child?"

Aunt John breathed a deep sigh of regret for her misspent past. It was not the first.

"I am quite sure that I told you to consider the lilies of the field as well," she cried, with a sudden brilliant inspiration, "and *they* toil not, neither do they spin, and if I didn't tell you to consider them, you've read it in your Bible a hundred times. Don't hurl the Scriptures at my head, Hebe, for I won't stand it. They are very much open to misconstruction and there's no end to the different interpretations of well-known texts. Arnold has three hundred a year of his own, and you have four. If you live in the country, as of course you will wish to do, there will be an ample income for both of you to grow like the lilies. You can consider the ways of the ant in your spare moments. Arnold won't object to that if you don't ask him to go any further. And, pray, why should he, who has enough money, work unnecessarily, and tear it from the hands of those who really do need it?"

Hebe's lips trembled; she began to cry a little and fumbled for her handkerchief.

"In all my life," she said, "you've never said such dreadful and extraordinary things to me before."

Aunt John was charmed with her own foresight.

"If Arnold earns more money," she pursued, "if he wastes and spoils his happy young life by settling down to some sordid, monotonous occupation which he loathes, he will rob—he *must*

rob, if you know anything of political economy—some deserving creature with an invalid wife and nine crippled children, of their daily bread."

Hebe didn't know anything of political economy, which was perhaps as well, and the shot went deeply home.

"No one has nine crippled children," she said, feebly irritated.

"Don't cavil at my words," said Aunt John briskly. "Arnold is a lover in a thousand. He adores you in a most inexplicable way. He is a real Prince Charming, and I wish I was your age again. *I'd* wake you up."

Poor Hebe thought ruefully that she was succeeding very well as she was, if waking up was the end she had in view.

"Don't play with fire." Aunt John had never taken the upper hand so thoroughly for years, and she was having a really good time. "Think of the future. Think of yourself as a lonely, miserable, neglected, unhappy, sour, unloved, unloving old maid. Look at me."

Fair and fat and jolly, she sat in her comfortable chair and beamed at her niece.

"Look at me and take warning. You aren't sugar to everybody's tea, my dear," said she ruthlessly.

Hebe, in spite of her grief and astonishment, found this too much for her and burst into an irrepressible little laugh.

"You are dreadful, Aunt John!" she cried. "And how can I take warning by you when you're as jolly as anything? Besides, you're a widow. You're not an old maid. Arnold has been asking you to say all this to me. I feel sure that Arnold is at the bottom of all this."

"Nothing of the kind," her aunt said stanchly. "Arnold is a man, my dear, and he'll fight his battles without any go-betweens and ambassadors and muddle-makers of that sort."

"Can't you see," Hebe said, turning with a weakened last appeal, "can't you see how dreadful it is for an able-bodied man to lead a useless, idle life?"

"Don't call him able-bodied." Aunt John was so pleased with herself that

she drifted into low comedy. "Don't talk as if he was a sailor with a wife in every port! He'll work like anything at amusing himself—he has a hundred hobbies as it is, and after all, you might do worse, both of you, than try to make life one long holiday for each other."

Hebe rose and rang the bell viciously.

"I wish Lucy would take away these tea-things," she said irritably. "I've rung twice. And I wish you weren't so fond of reading horrible books about low sailors and disreputable long-shoremen, Aunt John. It seems to completely alter your point of view and change your whole moral code, and make life so difficult for—for other people."

She rang again.

After some minutes a tousled head and a stained and patched scarlet bodice sidled round the edge of the door.

"They've gone prancin' off to the Wakes, both on 'em," Mrs. Lythgoe remarked. "They might 'a' known you wouldn't want me a-sidin' pots from the parlor in my every-day, whether your company's gone or stayed. There's no holding that old Treessa in, and Lucy's as full of sauce as a hegg. I told 'em what I thowt, but pearls before swine was nothin' to what 'appened to my friendly words of advice."

Aunt John sat bolt upright in her chair.

"To the Wakes!" she cried. "Now?"

"Aye," said Mrs. Lythgoe, edging in for the tray. "Old Treessa's a-ridin' on them spotted 'orses by now, I don't doubt, and they're playing 'Rainbow' and 'My Cleopatterer' on the 'orrid organ as works 'em, till my 'ead's treadin' on my 'eels. Low, I call it—a low haunt."

"I told them," Aunt John said gloomily, "that they weren't to move out of the house till dinner was over."

Mrs. Lythgoe smiled.

"There was no 'oldin' Treessa back," she said sarcastically. "Young blood will have its way, they tells us, and I wish you'd 'a' seen the ould lady with her feathers wavin' an' noddin' in her

bonnet, and beads danglin' on her mantle cape, and that Lucy with her pearl beads an' picture 'at lookin' as like the Queen of Sheba as ever I see."

She disappeared. Hebe had dissolved into laughter at her aunt's agonized face. Mrs. John, too, dearly loved her dinner.

"Never mind, auntie," she said kindly, warming with a sudden resolve to rise to the occasion, a sudden joy at the prospect of immediate action to distract her confused thoughts. "I'll cook the dinner," she said cheerfully, "and we'll have caviar, and pâté-de-foie-gras, and the fatted calf, and lobster salad, and Charlotte Russe and champagne. You shall be as ill as you like. And you mustn't be angry with *them*, you know, because, after all, they're only behaving like the lilies of the field, aren't they? And you know how you admire *their* habits."

For some inexplicable reason Hebe's heart had been lightened a little. Her dark and dreadful secret was pushed away at the back of her mind, and a half-developed new feeling struggled for existence in her heart, and grew and strengthened even though she fought it and almost denied its very existence. She ran about the kitchen full of energy, and hurried Mrs. Lythgoe up almost more than that lady could bear. And not until later, much later, did the dark shadow come back to its place to hide this new warmth of the sun. She was fond of cooking, fond of all household things, and it was nice to have the big, airy kitchen to herself. She kept Mrs. Lythgoe out of her way in the scullery preparing vegetables.

Aunt John enjoyed her dinner thoroughly, as Hebe had meant her to do, and everything was cleared away and forgotten, Mrs. Lythgoe included, when the truants came in, flushed and happy. Old Teresa was as gay as a bird. She pranced around the kitchen in her nodding feathers, talking loudly and mimicking the wandering minstrels of the penny shows, and she jeered lightly at Lucy, who had no spirit.

"You took enough for both of us,"

Lucy remarked pertly, off her guard for a minute.

Hebe turned sharply.

"What!" she cried.

"Treessa's spirits is good enough for both of us," Lucy amended smartly. "Lor', miss, she's a fair treat to take out, she is! Spry as a sparrer and no error. I thought I shouldn't never get 'er off them razzle-dazzlers."

Teresa, struggling shakily with her bonnet-strings, glared at Lucy, and her high spirits seemed suddenly to wane.

"The 'All party was there," Lucy went on, "and Lady Primrose in a pink dress—she looked lovely, miss, with 'er cloak all open and pearl beads just like mine round her neck. An' Miss Dill, all in green shiny stuff, ridin' everythin' and laughin' and goin'-on and enjoyin' 'erself same as me an' Treessa, and all the gentleman shying at cocoa-nuts, and 'ittin' 'em, too, an' givin' 'em to them boys as 'ang round. Treessa says to me as she'd got a real 'appy face—for a lady—and so she 'ad."

Hebe kept reproof for the morning, and went wearily upstairs again. Aunt John had already gone to bed. She didn't light the lamp in the drawing-room, but drew back the curtain and crouched in her favorite corner of the window-seat, looking out at the dark garden. There was no moon. That joyful undeveloped consciousness had left her, and the old horror came back to fill her mind and frighten her.

And then, as she sat there, she heard once more the quick, light, running step she knew so well, and someone tapped at the window. Hebe opened it. Letty crept in and put up her two hands on Hebe's shoulder, leaning on her with such a dead weight that the girl sank back to her seat while Letty crouched at her knee.

"Hebe," she said hoarsely, flinging her arms across the girl's knee and hiding her face there, "he knows—oh, my God, Hebe, he knows everything!"

"Knows what?" Hebe asked, sharply and disingenuously. "Who knows? What does he know?"

"About the bridge," Letty said in a whisper. "About the broken prom-

ises. Someone's told him. Oh, it was cruel—cruel. It's all over. He's gone away. I think Violet must have told him. I shall die if he goes away. Violet *must* have done it. There's no one in the whole world I can trust but you."

VIII

HEBE will not soon forget that night, or remember how she got the sobbing, distracted, heart-broken girl to bed at last. She sent the servants with a message to Lady Primrose and kept Letty for the night. Indeed, Letty refused to go; refused to go near Hardy's sister or Violet the traitor.

"You've stood by me," she said at last, worn out with crying. "You're my friend, dear. Let me stay with you, Hebe. I hope I shall never see any of those others again as long as I live."

And Hebe, herself more miserable than she had ever been in her life, tried to comfort her, made her drink hot milk and put her to bed; but she didn't tell the truth. Her courage failed her then. How could she?

How could she, with the girl clinging to her, trusting her when everyone else had failed her, crying like a poor, tired child on her shoulder? How could she confess then? Later on, she told herself, she must, of course, confess. She must not let Miss Mendelssohn be blamed for what she had done. And the mere fact that she disliked and distrusted Violet Mendelssohn so much only strengthened her conviction that it was her duty to confess at all costs.

And what were the costs? Letty's love, confidence, trust, friendship. All these things she would lose and lose forever. And she had ruined the life's happiness of the girl she loved better than anything in the world.

It was not a nice thought. It was not a nice night that Hebe spent, tossing about, crushed and in anguish.

Letty, who had cried till she fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, lay still sleeping soundly when Hebe rose. The morning sun filled the room with light

as she drew the curtains and lit up Letty's face. She was one of those girls who look like a child in their sleep. Her face, though tear-stained and very pale, still looked fresh and round; her curled lashes and tumbled bright brown hair caught a tinge of the sun's gold. Hebe drew a deep breath, looked at the little outflung hand and sank down on her knees beside the bed with a groan. And she dared not even pray.

She let Letty sleep her sleep out, and cooked and carried up a delicate little breakfast at twelve o'clock and sponged her face and hands and brushed her pretty hair out of her eyes before she ate, with a tenderness unknown to the firmly-treated Aunt John. But she was sick at heart as she did it, and her hands trembled so that she could hardly hold the brush.

"Letty," she said harshly as she met one of the girl's tearful, loving glances, "can you forgive your enemies?"

Letty's face changed a little.

"Don't, Hebe," she said. "You mean Violet. Don't preach to me this morning. I'm not good like you, dear. I've never had anything to forgive before. And my brain feels all numb and stupid this morning. I can't think and I am afraid of the time when I shall be able to."

"If I did something very dreadful, could you forgive me?"

Letty smiled faintly and swallowed a little hot tea.

"You, Hebe?" she said. "Goose!"

"But if I did?" Hebe demanded.

Letty was silent for a few minutes.

"I can't be angry with people I love," she said. "I forget. I can't remember unkind things if I love people. I'm rather a forgiving person, I believe—and I think it must be because I'm such a good-for-nothing myself. It's so easy to do wrong things and so easy to understand that people haven't meant to do horrid things at all. But you see I've never had much to forgive. People have been awfully nice to me always. But Violet doesn't like me. I think it's because—" She stopped herself suddenly. She was

not a malicious girl, and after all it was only a suspicion of hers that Violet Mendelssohn had wanted, and tried her best to make Hardy Schlesinger fall in love with her. Violet had always been very friendly to her, and Letty told herself, as she had done before, that perhaps it was pure imagination on her part that Miss Mendelssohn was jealous of her and envied her her lover.

Letty went back to the Hall after luncheon very white and subdued, and Hebe was afraid that her calmness only meant that her brain was dulled to the pain of thought and that presently she would begin to realize everything with a more intense and more unbearable suffering.

She was almost desperate herself. She clung to Aunt John because she dared not be alone with her thoughts, and she spent the afternoon, when her aunt slept, cake-making in the kitchen. Teresa told Lucy behind the scullery door that she'd never known a real lady come into the kitchen of an afternoon. She was tired and headache, disinclined for food or work, and she felt it hard that her afternoon's nap should be lost through Miss 'Ebe's officiousness.

"Who wants 'er cakes?" she asked querulously. "Fussin' an' weighin' and measurin' an' paperin' tins an' all. I'd make 'em myself in ten minutes, an' 'ave 'em bakin' in the oven, too. Dirtyin' scales for nothin' an' all the basins and bowls in the 'ouse."

Teresa's cooking was simplicity itself. A pinch of this and a handful of that and enough of the other to make it as thick as cream—a happy, trustful method which was but as a lottery in Hebe's carefully trained mind, and she regarded it with horror.

But the cakes didn't engross her sufficiently, it seemed, and Lucy regarded her set lips and grim eyes with gloomy foreboding.

"Have a nice cup of tea, Miss Hebe," she suggested diplomatically. "Treesa's got the kettle on for ours."

But Hebe wandered out into the garden, telling herself fiercely that it was

n't her fault at all. Fate was against her. She had acted entirely for the best. She had thought Schlesinger loved Letty deeply and truly enough to behave generously at such a crisis. It wasn't her fault that he was so hard, so brutal, so un-Christianly unforgiving. Hebe told herself that she had behaved in the only honorable way, and that for Letty there could have been no real happiness based so entirely upon a lie. She wandered from the unsheltered kitchen garden, where the hot sun beat fiercely upon her smooth dark head, to the round lawn under the drawing-room windows, where Letty had so often slipped into shelter; but the place was haunted for her. The strident, unreasonable voice of her conscience clamored a word at her until she held her burning forehead with her two hands and thought she must be going mad.

"Confess! Confess! Confess!" it said. And Hebe, try as she might, could not shut her ears to it. And behind that imperious command a quieter, more dreadful voice repeated to her insistently the true motive for her confession—no, that was not the word—the true motive for her *treachery*.

She went round the corner of the house with dragging, listless feet, and down the rhododendron path by the perennial border to the orchard. The blaze of color from the poppies and sweet-peas was gray to her gloomy eyes. The orchard was always cool, and she walked straight across it to the far end where the little plank seat stood under the high wall. And then she sat down and buried her face in her hands.

Arnold found her there later on. He had found Aunt John first, quietly drinking her tea in solitary state; and she had sent him to look for Hebe. He knew where to find her, he thought.

He sat down beside her and waited, and although she felt his presence, she didn't move or even uncover her face.

"You did the right thing," he said at last in a low voice. "I know that my opinion is worth nothing to you, but I must tell you again that you did the only possible thing."

Hebe shivered.

"You couldn't have betrayed her," he said gravely. His longing to take her in his arms and comfort her was almost more than he could manage just then, and he hardly dared to speak lest he should say the wrong thing.

Hebe looked up suddenly. There were no tears in her wide dark eyes, although her lips were trembling; but Arnold's face, tender, loving, compassionate, brought them to her eyes at last. They had been very slow in coming.

He knew her so well, he saw every mood and change in her so quickly; he guessed that she was weakening somehow, and dared much. He took her trembling hand in his and kissed it.

"If you knew how I honored you for doing it—" he said simply.

Hebe was gazing at him with blank, fascinated eyes. She forgot for the moment all the details of her trouble; his words conveyed no meaning to her other than his love and pity. She remembered only that she had a great aching burden and that because Arnold loved her so he was willing and waiting to bear it for her. Her lips trembled still more, and her eyes grew soft. It became suddenly one of those rare and disconcerting moments when nothing seemed to matter but the way she loved him.

"Arnold," she began in a husky whisper, but her voice broke almost before she had spoken his name.

He drew her head to his shoulder and kissed her for the first time. She shut her eyes and gave herself up to the extraordinary relief which was filling her heart and mind.

"Hebe," he said in an uncertain voice. "You know, Hebe? You know—"

But Hebe dared not break the spell. She was silent still. First this blind relief, then, little by little, a wakening consciousness that Arnold could not take this burden on himself. She hadn't really been able to cast it off. Yet *he* wasn't good, either. If she had done wrong, he would certainly be only sorry for her because he wasn't good himself.

"At least——"

She drew herself away, half-frightened presently, when she remembered that Arnold didn't even know the truth. There was no real relief for her yet, not even the relief of absolution from the most loving and lenient and tolerant lips of the man who loved her. She must tell him the truth.

"Arnold," she said slowly, "you guessed, didn't you—about that night after dinner—on the terrace when Mr. Schlesinger asked me? Asked me . . ."

"Yes," said he, in some surprise that she should hark back to that at such a moment as this.

"You know that he asked me—about Letty?"

"Yes—at least, I guessed that it was that."

"I lied to him."

"Of course you did," Arnold said cheerfully. "You couldn't do anything else. I don't know how he could have expected you to tell him."

"Oh!" Hebe cried miserably. "How can you say 'of course'? It was a lie—a downright, black, dreadful lie. How can any good come to Letty from a lie? How could she build her life's happiness on such terribly shifting sands?"

Arnold was silent. He despaired of making her understand. Men, he supposed, must have a different standard of honor.

"The thought of that lie," said she, "nearly killed me. And so—" She glanced at him apprehensively, wondering though even at that moment that the tables had so turned. *She* was pleading her cause, and Arnold, Arnold the ne'er-do-well and backslider, was the judge. No one else considered this young man to be either of these pretty things.

"I told Mr. Schlesinger the truth," she said in a whisper.

"Hebe!" He turned to her with a shocked disbelief which exasperated her.

"It was right," she said doggedly. "I was only trying to do my duty. I was sure, quite sure, that it would be best for her in the end if Mr. Schlesinger knew the truth. I thought—I thought

he ought to marry her and save her from all this—this worry and deception."

Arnold said nothing. He was busily rooting up a tuft of field-parsley with his stick. Hebe looked away from him, waiting.

"Well?" he said at last. "And how has it turned out? Will he forgive her and take her away from it all?"

Hebe caught her breath.

"He is a brute!" she said in a whisper.

"What do you mean?" Arnold asked quickly. "You don't mean—?"

"He has gone away," Hebe said. "He has broken off his engagement and left her. He has gone away."

Arnold said something under his breath; then:

"These *good* people!" he said aloud with bitter emphasis.

Hebe half-rose to go in. She understood how he included her in this. She rose to go in, for she realized now how completely he had failed her.

Arnold rose, too.

"Wait a minute, Hebe," he said sharply, and the change in his voice was a revelation to her. "I should like you to tell me, if you don't mind, what happened that night at the Hall?"

"What night?" Hebe asked feebly. And although she knew quite well what he meant, she did not dream of disobeying him, and stood still.

"The next day—the day after Schlesinger spoke to you—the night you were so late. The night you said you had been at the Hall."

Hebe's face was as white as a sheet, but a sudden flame of anger lit it up now.

"I didn't mean to tell," she said proudly. "I shouldn't have told anyone about it. But now I must tell. I went up in the afternoon to beg Letty to tell Mr. Schlesinger herself, and I found them playing bridge—*gambling* for high stakes in Primrose's own sitting-room, and even while I was there Letty lost a great deal of money. It nearly drove me mad to see her deliberately heaping up fresh worry for herself as she was doing, and I

begged her to stop. She wouldn't listen to me—and I—I couldn't bear it any longer. I mixed all the cards up together and stopped the game. They were furious—even Letty, but I wouldn't let them play. Every time they dealt I mixed the cards up and I said that if they didn't stop I'd go down and tell Lord Wintergrey and the whole house what they were doing—what they were always doing."

"Well?" said Arnold quietly.

"They carried me out of the room," she cried hotly; "Primrose and Violet Mendelssohn, by brute force; and Letty only laughed. 'Don't hurt her,' she said; but she laughed and said: 'Meddlesome Matty must be punished.' And they carried me up to a dusty, fusty old attic and locked me in."

Arnold couldn't help smiling in spite of himself.

"That wasn't the worst of it!" she cried, her eyes full of angry tears. "They forgot me."

"Forgot you?" Arnold said in some surprise. The thing then had gone beyond a joke.

"They went down to tea, and then out in the motor till dinner, and it wasn't till they went to Primrose's room at midnight to play again that they remembered me."

"Abominable!" said Arnold warmly. "And—no dinner, I suppose?"

"Dinner!" cried Hebe. "I'd have died rather than eat my dinner. And I screamed and screamed till I was faint and sick. And I heard rats—I know there were rats—racing round me in the dark. And then someone heard me—I believe it was Mr. Schlesinger. His room is somewhere up in that wing, and I heard him call out."

"Did he let you out?" Arnold asked quickly.

"No." Hebe spoke in a low voice. "I realized, you see, what it would mean to—to Letty and his sister. I wasn't so mean as that, Arnold. I didn't scream any more after that. And he listened a minute or two, I suppose, and then went away. Letty let me out. She wanted to send Am-

broisine for some supper, but I wouldn't speak to her. I ran home."

Arnold was lost in thought for a long time. His face expressed nothing to her, but when he spoke his voice was curt.

"And the next day you told Schlesinger?"

Hebe said nothing, but the warm color in her cheeks roused by indignation faded slowly away.

"Do you think," he asked drily, "that your sense of right and wrong changed when you were so angry with your friend? Do you——?"

Hebe broke in with a little gasping cry. She had never in her life heard Arnold speak in such a voice.

"Arnold, you must see that I did it because it was the only right thing to do. You don't think——?"

"I think," said Arnold with cold deliberation, "that it was a perfectly devilish thing to do."

IX

LETTY dressed herself that night in a miserable, half-hearted way, and found an occupation which was usually only too full of interest and charm a singularly dreary one. She put on a black gown because she hated black and never looked well in it and because Hardy had hated it, too. As he had often told her, it was wicked to put a creature so full of light and life and color into such somber, shadowing disguise. She wore no flowers—no jewels. It was like Letty to dress for her part. After a moment's hesitation she walked down the corridor and up two little steps to Philippa Van Rooy's room. She must talk to someone.

Hardy's sister was a monkey-like little person with the delicate skin and beautiful little hands and feet of the typical American woman. She was a widow, and although she had married entirely for money, her husband had managed his affairs so badly that he had been obliged to shoot himself on a brief trip to the Adirondacks rather than explain his mismanagement to

the charming but exacting wife who demanded so much luxury. Her own small fortune had disappeared with her husband, and she lived now on the generous allowance her brother made her—a generous but conditional allowance. Hardy had a horribly commercial mind, she said.

Letty knocked.

"It's only I—Letty. May I come in, Phil?"

Ambrosine opened the door for her with her hand swathed in a towel. Philippa was sitting in an easy-chair before the glass, a handkerchief round her hair, a towel round her neck and her face hidden by a smear of some white grease—Madame Somebody's skin-food, Ambrosine called it. The maid began to work delicately with her fingers in rings and curves. At the corners of the eyes where crow's-feet come, at the corners of the mouth and especially at the forehead lines, she smoothed the skin in the opposite direction patiently for a long time.

Letty sat down beside the dressing-table and planted her elbows recklessly among the litter of little silver boxes and jars and manicure tools, and all the bottles and sprays that Ambrosine was using.

"What rot it all is!" she said gloomily, staring at her friend. Mrs. Van Rooy's appearance was certainly extraordinarily unattractive.

"What?" Philippa asked without interest. "Take more trouble with the line between my eyebrows, Ambrosine. It gets deeper every day, I am afraid. Massage it very carefully. It is getting serious."

"Making oneself pretty. Taking out lines. Trying to keep young. It all comes to one end."

"The grave, I suppose," Philippa suggested calmly. "You're in a bright frame of mind, I must say. I daren't open my eyes or this horror will creep in, but you sound as if you'd been crying all the afternoon. You'll destroy all pretense of good looks if you give way to that kind of thing. I suppose Hardy has not written yet?"

Letty made no reply. She knew that

Phil knew he had not written; that he never would write again.

"Do you think it *was* Violet?" she asked slowly, picking up as she spoke a little ring stand and covering her white fingers with Philippa's diamonds and sapphires and rubies. Mrs. Van Rooy's jewelry was beyond criticism, and Letty loved her pretty hand as she looked at it.

"How you do love to blaze, Letty, don't you? Of course it *must* have been Violet. She wanted Hardy for herself, you see, and was quite extraordinarily full of hope until he got engaged to you. She never could see that she wasn't in the least his style. He never did admire those dark, horse-faced women. He's too American to want to marry a woman with a face like an Apache or a handsome Cherokee."

Letty fidgeted restlessly with the things on the toilet-table and dropped a little tray of odds and ends with a clatter that made Philippa jump and make a monkeyish grimace.

"I'm sorry, Phil—I'm all dithery with nerves tonight. I drop everything I touch. And I hardly dare to go down to dinner. You'd think I'd contracted the morphia habit to look at my hands shaking. And I sha'n't sleep. I'm afraid—horribly afraid of the night. Have you got any sulphonal or trional or any of those things? You must give me something to make me sleep to-night."

"I've got some bromide," Mrs. Van Rooy said promptly. "But you'd better not get into the drug habit, Letty. You aren't strong enough—strong-willed enough, I mean. I'll give you a mild dose of bromide to cheer you up. If you'll wait till Ambrosine clears this horror from my face, I'll hunt for it."

The maid carefully wiped the skin-food away with a soft cloth and dabbed her mistress's face with a cold paste of oatmeal and rose-water, repeating the massage movements quickly till the stuff dried and rolled off under her quick fingers, leaving a clear skin. With soft little pinches she brought a delicate pink into the cheeks now, and

presently she stopped and crossed the room to get the benzoin to drop into the hot water she was to wash it with.

Philippa leaned forward quickly, an odd-looking little creature with her pretty hair hidden away under the awkward handkerchief.

"There's only one chance for you," she said quickly, "if you care enough. You'll have to humble yourself and beg him to forgive you. You'll have to grovel if you want to get him back again. I know Hardy. Write to him and beg him to see you once again, and then behave exactly like a door-mat. It's no good trying to win him over. The more charming you are the more will he disapprove of you. He's in the mood to disapprove of your usual methods ferociously. It's just possible that a Letty in sackcloth and ashes, or a Letty in tears, will touch his heart. But if you pass it over lightly or try to laugh it off, as you generally do when you're ashamed of anything, you're lost. See?"

Letty saw.

"I can't write to him," she said hopelessly. "I simply can't. It's all over."

Ambrosine came back with her steaming bowl and softly sponged Philippa's determined face. Then she sprayed it with some pleasant-smelling astringent lotion, dried it, powdered it, and took off the handkerchief, and when she began to brush out her mistress's thin, fair hair Letty rose to go.

"You'll be late," she said, and trailed disconsolately across the room. But she turned back before she reached the door. "It's quite early," said she. "Will you come to my room for a few minutes before you go down, when you are ready?"

"You just told me that I should be late . . . Not quite so high, Ambrosine. I don't want to look like a prancing cockatoo. . . . All right, Letty, I'll come right along in a few minutes. Take the bromide before you go down. I'll give you another for the night."

Her shrill voice softened a little and her face grew almost pitiful, and she hurried over her toilet and rustled down the passage to Letty's room with as little

delay as possible. She found the girl huddled up in a low chair by the fire, and stood looking down at her in silence for a few seconds, thinking deeply and twirling the rings on her tiny hands fiercely as she thought. Letty looked up. Her beautiful eyes were dull with pain and almost stupid.

"Without a word," she said. "Oh, Phil, to go away without a word."

"He said a good many words to me," Phil cried sharply, sliding her little beaded shoe up and down the smooth brass curb of the fender. "He's got the devil's own temper sometimes, my dear, as you'd have found out."

"Didn't you—speak for me, Phil?"

Philippa walked across the room for a chair, but came back without one.

"Yes," she said. "I did speak for you. I told him what you told me. I told him you went on playing because you owed so much money and because you hoped with a bit of luck to pay it off before you married him. I said you wanted to come to him with a clean slate. I said you had your trousseau to buy. I said everything I could think of, and he just stood there looking like grim death and said nothing."

"You said he said a good deal," Letty cried, childishly irritated by the discrepancy.

"So he did." Philippa's face grew hard again. "He told me what he thought of *me*. He threatened to cut my allowance, and he said every unkind, cutting thing he could lay his tongue to. He said women could never be trusted out of sight, not even the best of them. He said that in all his wanderings he'd only struck one real honest girl. I don't know who he can mean by that, but I expect she was frankly impossible in every other civilized way. Oh, yes, he said a good deal. He didn't stop saying things till I began to champion you and plead for you. I've never pleaded another woman's cause in my life, and heaven knows why I did it then, for it only made him the more furious with me. I almost wish now that I'd minded my own business. I'd rather he'd have *sworn* at me than stood staring out of

the window in that black, bitter way. And when I told him about the bills and the debts he drew a deep breath and said, 'That settles it.' And it did seem to, for the next thing I heard he'd taken the motor and gone without even a word of polite regret to Primrose or Lord Wintergrey."

"I see." Letty rose and laughed bitterly. "We'd better go down now. 'That settles it.' We'll have a real good bridge night tonight, won't we, in Primrose's room? It's something to feel that one's *free* anyway. It's quite a relief to get rid of the burden of secrecy. Don't you feel it so, Phil?"

Philippa, thinking of the generous allowance to be so soon curtailed, disagreed in silence. And that night the four girls played from eleven o'clock till nearly four. Ambrosine brought sandwiches and whisky-and-soda, and was sent to bed, and it was daylight when Letty crept to her room, feverishly excited and red in the cheeks, though she had drunk no spirits. She had lost over a hundred pounds to Phil and Violet Mendelssohn, and in all the world there was no one she could turn to for a penny. Her next quarter's allowance was already deeply mortgaged, and she dared not borrow any more from Primrose. She had a terrible night, and didn't fall asleep at all till eight o'clock. Then she slept heavily till one, to shudder at the sight of the cold breakfast-tray by her bed, and remember with a rush of horror all that she would have been so glad to forget.

Not even Hebe felt worse than Letty did that morning. She didn't think of killing herself, for she loved life even at its worst, and the thought of death terrified her. But she was sick with grief and wild with regret when she thought of Hardy, and then frozen with terror and despair when the memory of those awful debts forced itself upon her more sacred and less sordid sorrow.

She drove Primrose out in a motor in the afternoon, and although she was, as a rule, perfect mistress of the beautiful Mercedes, and a most skilful driver,

she was so reckless and erratic in her steering that her friend grew frightened, and made the chauffeur take her place, insisting on the girl sitting behind in the tonneau with her.

And afterward it was bridge once more, and again Letty had no luck. She grew desperate and played on with a white face and frightened eye. She was getting so frightened now that she could only feel a dull, searing pain at the thought of Hardy. And then she did at last get a good hand. She had lost two rubbers, and the first chance of retrieving her losses a little brought a tinge of color to her face. At the beginning of the third rubber Violet had suggested that they should stake fifty pounds on it—for a little excitement, she said. Letty, with a terrified look, had been obliged to agree to it. And they won their first game easily. They lost the second, and it was the third that cheered up Letty's spirits a little. Phil had declared "no trumps," and Letty was the third player, of course. She had eight hearts—ace, king, queen and five others, and she doubled with relief and confidence, for Violet understood, of course, that they were playing the heart convention and the game was theirs. Phil redoubled. Letty's cheeks glowed and her eyes danced, and she doubled again.

"You're very brave, Letty." Violet looked coolly across at her. She didn't often make a remark when she was playing, but Letty's white, tragically-lovely face aroused some slumbering emotion. "Aren't you a little rash?" she said.

Letty smiled across at her, waiting with happy confidence for her lead. Violet smiled, too, a little, and laid down a spade!

Letty's face changed. She caught her breath. Violet had no hearts, then? No hearts! But she would soon get her lead, no doubt. . . .

Primrose laid out the dummy hand. There were six diamonds with the queen and knave—the queen of clubs and three small ones. There were no hearts. Poor Letty! Phil had the other four, and an absolutely safe hand

—ace, king and small diamonds, ace, king and knave of clubs, ace, king and queen of spades. She took every trick by throwing away her hearts on the diamonds and clubs in the dummy hand.

The girls were all rather silent when Violet read out the score. She had deliberately led a spade when she had a heart in her hand. She had been playing the heart convention—that was taken for granted, and yet she had disregarded entirely Letty's call for trumps. Philippa and Primrose were hardly pleased with their victory, though Violet, of course, would pay up at once, even if Letty couldn't. And Violet cheerfully counted her losses.

"Seven hundred by tricks," she said; "thirty aces and forty for the grand slam. You've made a pretty haul this time—eighty—let me see—ninety-six pounds and fifty on the rubber—forty we lost before, Letty—that's a hundred and eighty-six pounds. Time we went to dress for dinner, my dear."

Letty sat white and silent. She didn't quite understand.

"I—I wonder why you led that spade," she said at last, with trembling lips, "when—when I doubled?" She was afraid of Violet and dared not say what she wished to say.

"Spade?" Violet raised her eyebrows. "I wasn't playing the heart convention. Why shouldn't I lead a spade? With my hand, it was the only card possible."

The other two wondered why she was talking such utter nonsense. Primrose, who was very fond of her, looked distressed. Philippa Van Rooy glanced sharply from one girl to another. Letty's reawakened consciousness of an enemy suddenly strengthened her. She set her lips and braved it out.

"It's your deal, Violet," she said, with a queer little laugh. "Cut, Phil, quickly. We've time for one more rubber if we're quick."

"I think we've played enough," Primrose said quietly, with an anxious glance at Letty's excited face.

"Nonsense!" Letty laughed bitterly again. "The luck will turn—I certainly ought to be lucky now."

And indeed she was, for Violet left it to her and she had another heart hand—the nine best hearts, three aces and a king—a royal hand. And Primrose led a spade. She laid down her hand on the table.

And as fate willed at that interesting juncture there came a knock at the door. Ambrosine went and spoke to someone outside. The girls waited impatiently. The maid came back.

"Monsieur Schlesingerr," she said. "*Ce pauvre Monsieur Schlesingerr.*"

Letty looked up quickly, but did not speak. Her eyes were wide with wonder.

"Here?" Philippa asked sharply.

"He has been kilt. He is in ze motor and a cart collide wiz it."

"What!"

Letty rose unsteadily, and gripped the table with a shaking hand.

"He was carried to a farm. It is twenty miles from here, and ze boy who brings ze message came by train, for zere is no telegraph—"

"Is he—dead?" Letty asked hoarsely.

Ambrosine glanced at her pitifully.

"He ees hurt, mademoiselle. He ees not conscious."

"I'll go!" Letty cried. "Oh, I'll go at once."

"I shall go," Philippa said calmly. "of course. You can come with me if you like. Primrose, you'll let us have one of the motors?"

"Won't you play out your hand first?" Violet asked pleasantly. There was no change of color in her handsome face, but that may have been because the rich color was not all the hand of God. "We must make our grand slam this time, Letty."

Letty turned on her with a terrible face and dreadful eyes.

"I think I've had enough bridge," she said hoarsely. "I think I've had enough bridge to last me all my life."

X

Mrs. LYTHGOE pinned up her short greeny-black skirt, over a striped red-and-blue petticoat, and told Lucy with some warmth to look sharp and not be all day getting her breakfast ready.

"What was that you was telling Treessa as I came in?" that young woman asked, without making any movement in the desired direction. She never would bring herself to realize the importance of the charlady's meals.

Mrs. Lythgoe rested her hands on her ample hips and prepared for a little pleasant conversation.

"One o' them gentlemen staying at the 'All 'ad a horful accident," said she, "an' is now lyin' at death's door over Manzor Drewitt way, along of 'is hinferral machine sloshin' into a innicent cart which is now gettin' all the blame, belongin' as it do to the workin' classes. The woman as picked 'im up thought as 'e were brasted. She thought, an' 'e thought, an' they all in 'em thought as 'ow 'e were brasted. But it were not to be."

Hebe, standing quietly listening at the kitchen door, gave a little frightened scream. No—oh, it wasn't possible—

"Who?" she said hoarsely.

Mrs. Lythgoe, charmed to find that her news had been so effective, went on with added relish:

"Mr. Sleshgar, the American gentleman from the 'All," she said. "Blowed up with 'is motor machine, near twenty miles away, an' lyin' at death's door at a lonely farm."

Hebe sank into the red-cushioned rocking-chair, and Mrs. Lythgoe regarded her with interest and joy.

"I'd never 'ad the glimmer of a hidea as she were courtin' one o' them 'All visitors," she told her husband afterward. "If you'd 'a' axed me I should 'a' said Mr. Arnold was 'er fancy. But you never know with a young woman—leadin' on the one and castin' their eyes at t'other. They're all alike."

"Don't you take on, miss," she said with kindly reassurance. "While there's life there's 'ope, an' as 'e says,

live an' let live, by all means. An' even if 'e does come to and find the use of 'is limbs again, I doubt if the poor gentleman will ever be quite right in 'is 'ead. Mrs. Van Row, 'is sister, and Miss Dill's gone tearin' off to catch 'is last remainin' remarks. I doubt they'll be too late. I 'ope 'e's made 'is will."

"Are you sure it's all true?" poor Hebe asked. She knew the habits of the village story-teller, and still held a glimmer of doubt.

"True as the words of the prophet," the lady said promptly, forgetting to mention which. "Rose Cobb, the under scullery-maid, run 'ome an' told everyone as she'd time for. The noos came with a farm b'y. You may take it from me as gospel."

Hebe was overwhelmed. She sat there dazed and speechless. So this was what she had done! She had driven Letty's lover away from her in a rage and then killed him. She was not only a liar and a traitor, but a murderess into the bargain. She was a fine person to talk of backsliding, to condemn her aunt, and Letty and Arnold as she had always done. When she went miserably into the sunny breakfast-room, where Aunt John sat placidly sewing by the open window with Selim on her knee, the sight of her face was alarming indeed.

"Hebe," said her aunt with some firmness, "tell me at once what is the matter."

"There's been an accident, Aunt John. Mr. Schlesinger's been killed in a motor accident." She repeated the story, and her aunt went at once into the kitchen for moré exciting details of this interesting and pleasing story.

Hebe crept up to her room and shut the door. She had broken Letty's heart, killed Letty's lover and quarreled bitterly and to the death with Arnold. She shut herself into an hour too dark to dwell upon.

Aunt John sent Lucy up to the Hall for news, but there was none. Mrs. Van Rooy and Miss Dill had gone to the farm where Mr. Schlesinger was lying. That was all.

Hebe never knew how she got through that day and that awful, awful night, with a hundred thousand demons of remorse and regret and shame and pity to torture her. And poor Aunt John could not get a word of the truth from her and could only guess feebly at what might have happened. And Arnold, who was, of course, in black disgrace, kept away. He, poor fellow, was almost as miserable as the girl herself, for he was almost sure that she would never forgive him for the way he had spoken. And after all, as he told himself, it was none of his business. Women had a different code of honor in these things. What he wanted now was his Hebe, not a paragon of broad-minded, unselfish loyalty. What he ought to have done was to have devoted himself to cheering and comforting the poor child in her black hour. And he'd made everything worse and hopelessly estranged Hebe at the very moment when she had softened and yielded to him. But to call himself "fool" and "brute" and "interfering ass," as he spent the day in doing, did no good to Hebe or anyone else. And he dared not go near her. When he heard the story of the motor accident his first impulse, of course, was to go at once to try to comfort her at any cost, but a moment's thought showed him that it would be useless. He could only make matters worse now.

Hebe rose the next morning in such a shocking state of nervousness that her aunt was really frightened. Her hand shook so that she spilt her coffee over the tablecloth, a thing she had never done in all her careful, neat little life.

"Go back to bed," said Aunt John with irritated anxiety. "I'll send for Greene. Go back to bed till the doctor comes. You've caught something in that pestiferous village. I always said you would."

"I won't go to bed." Hebe rested her aching head on her hand and stared gloomily out of the window. "I'm nearly driven mad by bed as it is. If you knew how glad I was to get up! And it's cruel of you to talk about that

pestiferous village as you do, when you taught me yourself that it was my duty to read the Gospel to the sick; when you insisted upon making me teach in the Sunday-school when I was only fourteen and hated it. You go back on everything now."

"Quite time I did," said Aunt John cheerfully, "if this is the effect it's all had on you, my dear. We live and learn and this is an enlightened age. I'd rather be an old Apostate than an old Soul Tormentor, as you're growing to be if you don't pull yourself up in time. Besides, if you've got anything serious on your mind, why not go and talk to the vicar about it, if you can't trust your poor aunt?"

"The vicar! He's the last man in the world I would go to in a time of trouble. He's the most unsubstantial person in anything, except figure, that I've ever known. He'd tell me to take more exercise in the fresh air and indulge in a little cheerful society. He's *chronically* unhelpful."

Aunt John's wide and genial mouth softened to a half-smile, but the smile died away when she looked at Hebe. She was hardly an amusing spectacle just then.

"He's very wise, my dear, in many ways," she said quietly. "And you must do as you like. But I think you will have to talk to somebody if you don't want to break down. Why not tell Arnold all about it?"

"Arnold!" the girl cried fiercely. "I hope I shall never see Arnold again as long as I live. So there! Aunt, if you worry me like this I shall—I shall run away. If you don't let me alone I shall go mad. No one can help me now."

The morning wore on wearily and drearily. About twelve o'clock she crept out into her old place in the orchard and flung herself into the long cool grass under the apple-tree by the walk, near the plank seat which Arnold had put up for her so long ago. And there she lay for an hour. There was nothing she could do now. Even confession was too late, for Letty had gone away. There was no news at the Hall,

and Lady Primrose and her father had motored over to Manzor Drewitt to find out exactly what had happened. She never thought of killing herself, though she was in the black, despairing mood which engenders that thought in the less strictly brought up. And to add suicide to murder could do no good to her lost soul. Poor Hebe!

Selim lifted his handsome chinchilla person from a sunny spot on the lawn and stepped daintily across the grass to her. Full of sympathy he snuggled his large soft face in her neck and purred in her ear with friendly pity. Curiously enough the caress, usually spurned by her, even unsought, comforted her a little, and actually brought the first scalding tears to her aching, burning eyes.

"Hebe! Hebe! Hebe—dear——"

Hebe raised herself slowly. Who called her? It *couldn't* be Letty's voice.

She sat up and with dazed eyes watched the girl coming in and out of the bars of sun and shade between the trunks of the trees, trailing extravagantly in the grass a delicate, shining Summer dress; always a girl with the grace of Spring. Her eyes were dancing, her pretty lips parted a little, breathlessly.

"Hebe dear, how deaf you are this morning! I've looked for you high and low, up and down, and in my lady's chamber. And Mrs. John said you were somewhere in the garden, lost in the bluest of blues, and I've come out to cheer you up. She said I was to cheer you, so I'll do my best, for no one knows better than I do how black the bluest blues can be."

Hebe rose slowly to her feet and stood staring at her. Letty put her two hands on her friend's shoulders and kissed her with such a warm, loving kiss that poor Hebe's frozen heart, thawed a little by Selim's friendly sympathy, melted still further and the tears came with blinding force. Letty drew her into her arms and kissed her again on her tangled black hair.

"It's a beautiful world," she said uncertainly, with a mist of tears in her own

blue eyes. "I'm on my way to Gretna Green, my dear."

"Letty!" Hebe raised her head quickly, wondering if trouble had driven Letty mad.

"Well, not literally, of course, because there's no point in Gretna Green nowadays. But we're in the coach-and-postilion mood, for all that. You've heard about Hardy?"

"Yes—he—is he——?"

"He's all right," Letty cried happily. "He was only a little bit stunned. And he's not angry with me any more. You see, he never went away to break off with me at all, Hebe dear. He went to buy a special license."

"Letty!"

"Yes," said Letty. "And it was Violet who told him——"

Hebe started, pulled herself together, and tried to speak. Now was the time. But she didn't speak.

"Violet told him that night after he asked you, and the next morning—that morning when he was so nice to me—you know, I told you what a happy morning we had, didn't I?"

"Yes," said Hebe hoarsely, "you told me."

"Well, he was trying all the time to give me enough confidence in him to make me confess to him myself, because someone," she laughed a little, "someone had told him that I was afraid of him. He wanted to give me a last chance to be honest with him. And then the afternoon when he was raging with disappointment he saw you, and you——"

Hebe broke into a sudden bitter cry, interrupting her.

"You know that I—oh, Letty, you know?"

Letty laughed again.

"Yes, I know everything now. There are to be no more secrets between Hardy and me—and I'm thank——"

Hebe interrupted her with trembling lips.

"You can't mean that you—you've not forgiven me, Letty?"

Letty grew grave and looked at her with an indescribable tenderness.

"My dear," she said quietly, "there's

no question of forgiveness between you and me, because we love each other. I knew, directly Hardy told me, that you'd done it from some high and noble motive which I was too selfish and shallow and—and dishonorable to understand, though I could—indeed I could appreciate it. And I believe you've saved me by it, after all."

Hebe lifted her amazed eyes; Letty sighed.

"Hardy was angry with me for being afraid to trust him," she said slowly. "And he thought I couldn't really love him if I treated him like that. But after that talk with you he went off to London in his motor without speaking to anyone except Phil, and she happened to meet him when he was in a rage.

"She thought it was his way of breaking with me. She told me how angry he was with me and with her. And then I heard he was hurt and I nearly died, Hebe. It was awful. The motor seemed to crawl till we got there, and when we went into the best sitting-room at the farm smelling of old clothes and sour milk, and saw him lying on a dreadful horsehair sofa as—as jolly as anything I—I went mad with joy, and Phil and the farmer's wife went away and talked about buttermilk and Spring chickens in another room. And Hardy told me that he'd seen in a lightning flash that the best thing he could do was to be married at once. He said he couldn't give me up, whatever my principles were, because he loved me, and that he was never going to let me out of his sight again because he couldn't trust me. I'm afraid—" She sighed, though her eyes smiled.

"What of?" Hebe asked.

"I'm afraid he's got a whole lot of rigid, open-as-the-day, cast-iron principles ready to instill into my feeble mind. But it's all true, Hebe, and I've sworn never to play again for more than penny points as long as I live. Even Hardy sees that I can't give it up altogether unless I retire from the world and wear gray serge in a nunnery forever."

Hebe drew a deep breath, but she

could find no words to say what she wanted to say.

"And being to all intents and purposes on my way to Gretna Green," Letty said cheerfully, "I must now fly the scene. I've all my packing to see to before I elope with Hardy tomorrow morning. We're going to be married in a church seven miles away where Hardy knows the parson, and then we're going to run away to the other end of the world in his motor. Good-bye, Hebe. Good-bye, my dearest dear."

When Hebe raised her eyes again Letty was gone. She took Selim in her arms, to his amazement and joy, and went back into the house. She bathed her tear-stained face, she ate her luncheon obediently, and in spite of her principles she even drank without a protest the wine her aunt poured out for her, and that anxious lady grew still more anxious. Directly afterward the girl slipped out into the lane and across the paddock to the little side-gate which led into the vicarage garden. But though she looked for him carefully, she did not find Arnold in any of his usual haunts. Strange to say he was not idling his time away with a novel and a pipe in the hammock, nor even was he asleep in the grass. The boat was lying high and dry in its little house, so he wasn't on the river. She always had the free run of the vicarage, but she didn't wish to meet the vicar or his housekeeper now. Disappointed, she turned sadly to go home.

But Arnold, for a wonder, was not idling his time away anywhere that afternoon. He was reading hard, with a cup of strong black coffee at his elbow to keep him awake. He was in the shabby old breakfast-room which had been Hebe's school-room long ago and which was now sacred to his studies.

The French windows were wide open, and Hebe, as she passed, glanced in and saw Arnold *working*. This was the last straw! She crept softly in and laid a trembling hand on his arm.

"Hebe!" He started up and the girl drew back, half-frightened.

"I came—I came—" she began.

"I was a brute the other day," Arnold said fiercely. "An interfering, thick-headed, domineering, priggish——"

"Don't!" Hebe said in a low voice, looking away from him. "You were quite right, Arnold. I knew even then that you were right. And I did it for revenge, I know now, and I've never had the courage to confess. It's too late now. Letty knew, and she forgave me. And I looked down on Letty once. And I looked down on you and yet

you wouldn't, either of you, have done a quarter of the dreadful things I *easily* did the first time I was tempted."

"Hebe—dear—dear—don't be such a miserable little thing. Hebe, I can't bear it when I love you so. Dear, don't cry like this——"

She was in his arms now, sobbing on his shoulder.

"I think," she said at last in a broken voice which went to his heart, "in fact, I *know*, that I'm the only real backslider of you all!"



IRON PASSION

By George Sylvester Viereck

LOVE'S smiling countenance I know,
But not the anger of the god,
For I have wandered where Boccaccio
And Casanova trod.

I am awearied of these pleasant things,
The gallant dalliance and the well-watched fire;
Give me the magic of a thousand springs
That shook the blood of young Assyrian kings,
That stirs the young monk in his cell, and stings
Crimson and hot,
Wearing the crown of unassuaged desire.
Break me or bless me—only love me not!

Come as a wanton red with rouge and wine,
And I shall weave out of my song for thee
A purpler cloak than his
Who, hating, loved that Lesbia. Come to me
A saint—the halo shall be thine
Of Beatrice.

There is no joy in tender loves or wise,
No sweet in wrong;
Come unto me with cruel, loveless eyes,
O iron passion of the lords of song!

THE DARK FERRASH

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

CABLE approached the house in the spirit of one who had never there been a guest. The day was Springlike and fair, and the little park before the house was making premature efforts to be green. Along its iron rail the row of carriages stood as at a function.

And it was, in its abhorrent way, quite an affair. He realized its smart importance as he overlooked the line of liveried footmen waiting at the house-door with those wraps and rugs that could not so early be with impunity discarded. At the entrance a stately butler accepted his dearly won card of admittance without a glance into his face.

The abhorrent part of it smote him at the threshold. There was no one to welcome him.

About him and above him spread and towered the abandoned house. Life and thought had gone away hand in hand. The halls were crowded, and yet Cable turned into a little alcove poignantly alone with the desertion of the place. He stood there looking out, again at the little park and the row of brilliant, eager equipages.

The sensation had come to him so suddenly, so unexpectedly—for he had expected no sensation at all save that of the wondering visitor in a museum of rarities—that it found him wholly unprepared to mask it in the face of even these inattentive people. If the ghost of the man who had paced these floors as master had been standing in the doorway, near the impassive butler, scanning anxiously each face for one which showed some vagrant thought of him, and seeing it upon Cable's countenance

had put a hand upon his arm incredibly becoming visible, the man could have been in no wise more shaken than he was.

He faced slowly about and surveyed the hall. Done wholly in marble it might have had a vault-like suggestion had it not been for the glowing red Genoese velvet of the high-backed chairs and their gilt, and the green verdure that hung upon the edges of every porphyry urn. Crowded together as for some gala occasion were men and women, filtering into the reception-hall, passing and repassing in endless streams on the stairway, and evermore arriving in new glittering carriages at the door. It might have been a ladies' day at some popular club, he thought, with a bitterness.

Nods and becks and wreathed smiles filled the atmosphere about him. Women, dressed to their finger-tips in the most inaudible whisper of all whispers of fashion, trailed their short skirts and bore their brave plumed hats proudly past him. Following them were men in the garb of the loungers of life, their glances wandering coldly from one thing to another.

"Did you get a catalogue?" was the question that first assailed his ears. And the second was like unto it, "What on earth, Billy, is an ecusson?"

So this is what it meant, mused Cable, in the embrasure of his two curtains at the window. This was the end of the brilliant laurel-crowned life—a vulgar auction like a county fair. The man who was dead had slowly but blithely gathered about him in this little enclosure that he called his own these things. He had indeed perhaps

spoken of them as his! He had haggled in Firenze for this glass, jewed in Moscow for the old sledge seat there in the corner, outbid a stubborn Englishman in Japan for the norimon yonder in the west room. And undoubtedly had he studied the arrangement of all these collected treasures; he had bidden Carlotsen and Miers and all of them to his house and they had debated long over the hanging of that Hans von Klotz.

Then, too, when he had made the place as wonderful as the time allowed he had received many guests, many perhaps of these same people that were now exchanging pleasantries on the stairway in the going up and the coming down. And he had piloted these friends about, pointing out the figures of the Florentine ceiling, drumming a couple of tankling chords from the old Mars d'Orléans spinet, or even letting run over his fingers the water from the Colonna fountain in the courtyard that led to the gallery.

He had never been discursive and tiresome, this poor Ingres Coleton. But he had loved a lovely thing, and the gold spoon that had been in his mouth the day of his birth had served but to feed him heartily of the foods to his taste. He had filled his house with beauty as the bee fills the hive with the honey of Hymettus Hill—and the gods take early those of whom they are jealous.

Cable had known Coleton in the bardest way, and never had the opportunity arisen, when they were both in the city, for his being one of the many privileged beings to hear the story of the assembling of that astounding collection. And now poor Coleton had had to leave it all, without warning, in an hour. The tent was struck suddenly in the darkness, and the dark Ferrash would soon have it dismantled and prepared for another guest.

Cable, his eyes wandering over the careless, sumptuous crowd, saw one curled, plumed and jeweled head nodding to him eagerly. Instinctively he went toward it. She was fifty, was Mrs. Wakely, and as middle in class as

in age, yet everyone seemed to know her. Everyone had to know her. One might better refuse to recognize the prevalence of the gripe.

She quite caught at his arm when he neared her. "Oh, Mr. Cable! Wonderful, isn't it?" Little did she care for an answer, turning her elaborate head to one side and another with a quick, keen emotion. But he could not refrain from saying it.

"Wonderful? It is hideously terrible."

A white face above her on the stairs flashed a sudden look at him. It was not a face he had ever seen before, yet just as one sharp glare of lightning can make one see in the landscape things that a whole day of placid sunshine would not bring out, he learned to know it well in that one glance.

It was a little face, inclined to thinness, though with a large mouth of vivid red, and a wide forehead. The eyes were of the color of the Autumn sky and the hair of the Autumn leaves. There was something in the pallor of the skin and the desperate sadness of the eyes that came to him like a message. In an instant, like a broken twig on the surface of running water she was carried away from him in the current of the climbing stream.

Mrs. Wakely, it is not to be supposed, heard or would have understood, had she heard, the answer to a question she had not asked. Her artfully composed head continued to turn hither and thither. "I have lost Miss Morrison," she cried, and then she gave him her eyes and became confidential. "You know she and poor dear Ingres—oh, I am quite sure of it. He was a most peculiar man, cold and reserved—you knew him? But I am sure it was all settled; in fact, it was at my house! Too bad he should have died just now—she might have had all this! She is wearing a hat with a long green plume. Do you see—why, there she is! I wonder now, Mr. Cable, if you could?"

He found her in the press by the feather on her bonnet, and introduced himself as Mrs. Wakely's messenger. "She has gone upstairs," he said.

"We are to find her in the music-room, near the organ."

"Don't let us go up just yet," she suggested. "I haven't seen half the things on this floor. How odd it is that we should all have been here so often and yet not have seen it all."

Cable observed her gravely. "I have never been here before," he said.

"Oh, really? But you knew Mr. Coleton, of course. Everybody did. How do you do, Mrs. Youngman?" She smiled at a pretty woman who was passing in the pressing throng. "Yes, a terrible crush, isn't it?" She turned again to Cable. "The sale begins in half an hour. I dare say the things won't bring one-tenth of their value. Have you seen Murchand and old Isak English? You know his shop, don't you? He just went in there. I heard him tell a man who was with him that he considered the Reynolds portrait of Lady Tredegear the prize of the collection."

Cable continued to watch her, though she gave him hardly a glance. As she started forward with the moving crowd again he kept at his place beside her, watching the businesslike manner in which she referred to her catalogue. She was pretty in a serene way—her clothes and her coiffure were not more placid than her face. He thought her about twenty. She had a youthful volubility that reminded him of the girls who—years before!—had taken tea in his rooms at college. "'Antique chasuble of Gothic red velvet with orphrey,'" she read softly from the booklet she held. "My father is crazy about old church vestments. He will be sure to bid on that. I must mark it for him. He won't get here in time to see anything for himself, I am afraid. But we have done so much shopping together in most parts of the world that he can safely trust me to select what would please him. Have you any particular hobby, Mr. Cable?"

"I am not wealthy enough to be a collector," he said idly. "My claim to that title is meager enough. I have a lot of steins and drinking-cups on my book-shelves—a cheerful sort of hobby,

if you must have one, don't you think so?"

"Yes, except when indulged by the Borgia family. Are there any here that you like?"

"I have seen none yet. I came from the door almost directly to you. There are undoubtedly such things about, and if, as you say, the prices do not soar above one-tenth the value, perhaps I can add to my possessions."

She gave him the fleeting glance of one who never considered mercenary questions. "There may be some up in the dining-room," she ventured. "Why will salesfolk call it a banquet hall?"

"Anything beyond a boiled joint and greens," he murmured. "What was it Steyne said about dining with the King? I've been to dinners where nothing but white wine and perhaps caviar made all the difference between one candlelight and another. But the Greeks are dying."

Her serene prettiness let it all go by. "I don't see anything in here," she said. "Shall we go up?" She turned her suave back upon the stone bench from Rimini with the gold scarf of perhaps Francesca herself glimmering against its severity. "I dare say Mrs. Wakely is wondering where I am. There is a dreadful crowd, isn't there?"

"Do you find them dreadful?" he asked.

The plume in her hat was surely green and so he was certain it must be she. But Ingres Coleton—well, after all, one never knew. And the dead are a close-mouthed association. He followed her a step or so. Then, "If you will let me get in ahead of you," he said, "I can so much more easily see to it that you are not made unrecognizable. So—yes."

The laughter and soft voices and sweet scents and exquisite colors of the kaleidoscopic crowd surged about them. Now and then she bowed to someone, now and then it was he who recognized a face and greeted it. But everywhere beside them in the press he felt the presence of the unseen host, pitifully beseeching some slight remembrance.

"Have they no idea where they are?" he found himself asking inwardly. "It really is not a shop, you know. Why did they do it just this way?"

He led her, without touching her, up the long stairs. No one seemed now to be coming down. They themselves were only a vertebra of the sinuous serpent that slowly forced its way upward. Women panted and laughed, men seriously found space for them.

Mrs. Wakely was, as she said she would be, near the organ. It was evident that she had been there so long, so much longer than she anticipated, that she had begun to take interest in even an old cornemuse that hung on the wall beside her, much as a prisoner will watch a blade of grass in his confinement. She turned to resume charge of her companion with something less than her usual insistent graciousness.

But Cable, pleading always the amateur enthusiasm of the half-hearted collector, made good his escape when he had seen them fairly meet. He wanted, quite blatantly, to get away from the serene prettiness of the woman who "might have owned all of this." It was somewhat blindly that he went away through the mass of peering, prying humanity, slipping past one portly dame to find himself apologetically getting out of the way of another, and avoiding all contact with people he knew as if he were there under an alias. The desire to "get out" was strong upon him.

And yet then only did he find the lure cast like the apple of Eden at his very feet.

It was a cup of transparent enamel cleverly disposed in veins of dull silver. The naked bodies of a man and woman done in ivory were separated by the swell of the bowl, but their outstretched arms touched finger to finger around the rim. The stem of the thing was a wooden cross, unrelieved by any ornament. The base was a Golgotha indeed, being a mere skull of bronze, and where the cross was held in its teeth the wood was splintered grimly. It was not a pretty toy, but the desire to

possess it consumed him. He could not go away, he knew, until the chance of securing it was his. It was a grotesque thing at best, violating every canon of art except in workmanship, but the very outrageousness of it lured him. He discovered by careful scrutiny that the enamel of the bowl, the indomitable obstacle that held the two figures apart, was full of strange bits—here a parchment scroll with a seal hanging, there a human eye, on the far side a key and a feather.

It stood, the cup, in the corner of one of the upper rooms in a cabinet. It was marked 282, and it was not prominently displayed. Yet he felt sure from the moment he saw it that every human being in that ever-thickening crowd wanted it more than life itself.

The room in which he had found it was a sort of bedroom. At least it had an old four-poster bed in one corner, now bare of curtains, and there was in another recess a clumsy piece of furniture that might be anything from a bureau to a writing-desk. What he had not noticed on entering, and what he did perceive as he looked about him there, was that the girl he had seen on the stairs was standing in the embrasure of the window. She was quite motionless and yet not with the repose of tranquillity. She was staring blindly out into the street.

He managed to find Isak English in the library where the sale was to be held, hunting him down as the one acquaintance likely to know the disposition of the sale. English was bristling with pencils, one over each ear and one in his mouth, and his hands were full of slips of paper.

"Drinking-cup—all that sort of thing goes first, vases and jimcracks." He managed to get his watch from his pocket and glanced at it hastily. "Sale begins now in twenty minutes. Better wait around here. They're bringing that stuff all in now—over there, see?"

He put the pencil back into his teeth and ran his notes over again hurriedly. "John Kolb wants me to buy the fountain regardless," he said indistinctly.

"New country house. I like that sort of an order."

Cable laughed shortly. "I wonder who bought it for poor Coleton," he said.

"I did," said Isak English drily.

The room was filling to suffocation, and it was with the greatest difficulty only that a way was kept clear for the auctioneer's men, who were bringing in the last of the bric-à-brac.

"Rotten poor management," grumbled English, standing his ground like a tree. "Shouldn't have tried to begin the sale till next week."

"They do seem to have crowded the mourners a bit," agreed Cable.

"But not in here!" said the other sharply.

"No, not here. I wonder who will——"

"Battleby has bought the house already—" English was adding figures as he spoke, a feat of double prescience that made Cable marvel where he stood. "The books are going to the City, I believe. Anyway, they're not for sale. And forty-five is nine hundred and two. Murchand is a clever auctioneer—ever heard him?"

Cable laughed again. "I am not a critic of the art," he said.

"Devilish hard job," snorted English reprovingly. "But he can't raise me on that Reynolds, just the same."

That he could not with all his persuasive confusing art was evident later, but long before that the contest of the drinking-cup held the attention of the many. On his raised dais, with his table before him, Murchand had babbled away many things in porcelain; porphyry and ware before he came to this cup of the cross. When he did lift it to prominence Cable caught his breath like a man who is fishing with a line that suddenly tugs between his fingers.

"This, ladies and gentlemen, is an unusual opportunity—this goblet was made by the celebrated Godfroi himself and has all the qualities that go to make a thing desirable. It is unique, daring, forceful, beautiful, valuable and hideous."

It was a clever word. It caught the

attention. Isak English smiled back at Cable from where he sat. The man had made good.

"Thirty," said Cable, over the heads of the roomful.

Murchand looked aggrieved. "Thirty?" he echoed, putting it by half-heartedly. "Is that thirty cents I hear offered? Why, melted down it would bring more on the scales. I really hate to lay aside my professional manner, but thirty is really so funny that I must suspend long enough to laugh about it. I'll take it myself for forty. What's the next, Tim?"

"Forty-five," said a voice clearly audible above the indiscriminate murmur of the crowd.

Murchand drew the cup again into prominence. "Forty-five," he said softly.

English smiled again. The man was more than clever. This was no trader's rattle. Yet he would not go above his limit for the Reynolds—that went without saying.

"Fifty," said Cable.

It was a mere gleam of a smile that Murchand flung out upon the room. He twisted the stem of the cup in his fingers, and shook his head considerably. There was a bated pause.

"Fifty-five," said the other voice.

Murchand leaned forward on the table, lifting the thing into view. "I want you to notice these ivory figures," he said quietly. "The workmanship is unsurpassable. Look at these hands. Every finger is stretching itself to its utmost to touch the next finger—and see how the woman is pressed against the barrier until"—there was a thorough hush throughout the room as his voice held them—"her bosom must have made the bar she leaned on, warm."

"Sixty," said Cable breathlessly.

English smiled again. The man was an artist. How well he knew that the usual deafening rat-a-tat-tat of the auctioneer would not stir these other people. He could quote Rossetti to them if he chose, but he could never raise Isak English on the price of that Reynolds, that was certain.

"You can't see, I know, from there," said Murchand, turning the thing about in his hands, "but perhaps you saw before and appreciated the work of the artist on the face of the man. With his head thrown back and his lips parted and the look of inextinguishable passion on his face, the unbearable yearning to be nearer, nearer—which thrills through every muscle of the arm down to the hungry finger-tips, the figure is the incarnation of glorious desire."

There was not a sound in the room.

"And the woman," said Murchand, "is so sweetly drawn toward him. What does she reckon the cross and skull below it? You see it all in her face—the world well lost, heaven well lost, even hell well lost!"

The platitude lifted a ripple in the room. "I am not urging it upon you—I want it myself. Will my assistant in the rear there please bid seventy?"

"Seventy," said an obedient voice, while Murchand smiled.

"Seventy-five," said Cable.

"Eighty," replied the other and earlier rival. It was a woman's voice and Cable turned toward it. There was the green plume—could it be she? There was small possibility that from those serene lips so hesitating and yet so urgent a voice could have issued.

"Eighty?" said Murchand, lifting his eyebrows.

"Eighty-five," said Cable.

He was still looking in the direction of the green plume. And so it was that he saw the other face again, white, vivid, but now stamped with a look of intense distress and sad eagerness. The eyes and the lips were eloquent, both seemed to be staring at him as if more than life itself hung upon his rivalry.

"Ninety," said the red lips of the white face.

"Ninety-five," retorted Cable mechanically.

There was a pause and he saw her draw in her breath. Her white face changed suddenly as the brilliant color spread over it. "One hundred."

"Now you're talking," said Mur-

chand, straightening. He had dropped the manner of a moment before and become again a hard-headed auctioneer. "One hundred—going—going——"

His sharp, businesslike tone brought Cable's eyes about. He forgot the white face and the flush that had so painfully transformed it. There was the cup and he wanted it. "One hundred and twenty-five," he said clearly.

Murchand mechanically turned toward the other side of the room and waited. But the bidder sat silent, motionless, her hands pressed tight together over her pocketbook, her arms rigid and her eyes cast down. The cup belonged to Cable.

He gave his name and address to the sharp-eared assistant who hailed him from the side of the room even as he made his way out of the crowd toward him. As he passed Miss Morrison, she smiled placidly at him. "I'm so glad you got it," she said. "Wish me as much luck with my chasuble, will you?"

He looked near her, with a pang of remembrance, for the white, eager face. But it was gone.

Old Isak English smiled at him, too, as he pushed past him. "Going?"

"Only thing I wanted," said Cable succinctly.

"Well, you paid too much for it. It's a rotten piece of work. Godfroi nothing! But didn't I say Murchand was clever? He's barking up the wrong tree, though, if he expects to get me up to his price on the Reynolds. Better come in tomorrow and see the battle."

The professional clatter of the auctioneer had broken forth anew, stimulating a somewhat lukewarm interest in an antique Spanish carving. Cable made his way slowly around the wall of the room to where the busy assistants were ticketing the articles as they were "knocked-down." "I want to take that drinking-cup away now," said he.

"'Gainst rules," said one man without looking up. He was tying a label on a pair of altar candlesticks. But he did glance up when the corner of a bank-note came between him and his labor. "I said," repeated Cable, "that I wanted to take the cup with me."

The man put down the candelabra, and in some way, as he turned, the bill found itself into his hand. He went on to Murchand, and as he was receiving from him the Spanish carving and the name and address of the reluctant purchaser who had been supremely bamboozled into taking it, Cable saw that he was saying something about his own affair. Murchand shook his head, listened again, glanced over at Cable and then nodded.

"Can you get away with it quiet-like?" asked the man, returning, the carving in his arms. "That there little door behind you will let you out on the ball-room stairs. I told him you were sailing for Europe tomorrow morning. It's against the rules."

Cable nodded and took the cup in his hand. "It is heavier than I thought," he said as he slipped out under the directions.

He was in a measure astonished and yet not in the least surprised when she met him at the foot of the stairs. It seemed almost natural that she should speak to him—her face could not have been more familiar to him if he had known her for many years. Down in the hall of the house, deserted, except for the man-servant at the door, the disregarded presence of the late householder seemed palpable again to Cable. They seemed to stand, the three of them, together.

"Going—going—" the words echoed in his mind insistently. What, indeed, would soon be left of all the possessions that had been the property of this poor ghost?

"Will you please let me have the cup a moment?" Her thin little face with its autumnal eyes was upturned, and the old eager look was upon it. She spoke without preface or explanation, and yet there was no gainsaying her. For whatever reason or purpose she asked it, he handed her the strange thing without a word.

She took it in her hands. "How

heavy it is to hold—alone," she said. He saw the clinging of her delicate fingers and the lassitude of her weak arms. If her phrase was an explanation—yet he did not understand. But he felt the presence of Coleton's personality more strongly than ever as he stood before her.

She turned aside a little. He knew that she was holding it as the woman held the child before she brought it before King Solomon.

The man-servant at the door stood unseeing, unfeeling as ever. The dismantled hall spread about them as empty as a theatre at midnight. Above them the voice of Murchand went painfully up the steps of a stair of progressive value.

All the stillness of an eternity compressed into a pause hung about them. He was wondering about her when she turned back, her face aquiver and ablaze. "I have only one hundred dollars in the world," she said. "But I can earn more. Won't you—and trust me?"

He stared at her. All the substance of her house, she was willing to give that? She read his amazement at the desperate privation as something less understanding, and she drew nearer to him, her eyes lifted with the expression of pathetic urgency he had come to know so well.

"One night we drank together from the rim of it," she said.

Cable caught his breath and drew back with a gesture.

"Will you—?" she faltered.

"Will you," he said, "please take it?"

She was holding it close to her, staring after him as a moment later he went out. Upstairs a serene, high-pitched voice was bidding on an antique chasuble. She watched him across the street in the sunshine, and then she sobbed.

"Going—going—" called the voice of Murchand in the room above.



THE EDGE OF A DREAM

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

EVER since I can remember I have had the dream. I suppose everyone has had his or her individual nightmare—most commonly nightmares of action, or, to be more exact, of some hideous enforced inaction under circumstances of an embarrassing or terrifying nature. But mine is different. I find myself quite unable to express—and so strong is my sense of fear at the very recollection that I seldom attempt it—the agony of fright with which my own particular dream inspires me. It is simply this:

In walking about my house—whatever house I happen to be living in at the time—I find myself in a certain room. The room is always the same—rather small and half-dark. I can never see its contents distinctly. I just know that it is filled with old-fashioned furniture and that there are some old portraits in tarnished gilt frames upon the wall. The only thing I can see clearly is a tall mahogany chest of drawers with brass knobs. The process of the dream is always identical—as soon as I recognize the room—and the consciousness always steals over me gradually—I am overcome with the most indescribable paralyzing fright; then I wake up. The dream never goes beyond that.

I began dreaming it when I was a child. As I grew older it came less often. There was a lapse of almost three years between the last two times, and I had almost believed the nightmare outgrown, exorcised—but I found myself mistaken. What I always used to wonder was if I would ever see that room, and if I did, what would happen there.

It was, as I remember it, late in November that I finally accepted Dorothy Brewster's periodically extended invitation to spend the weekend at their old home in New Jersey. Being a New Yorker myself the name of New Jersey invariably calls up associations of a modern suburban character, so that it is difficult for me to realize it as containing old historic houses or indeed anything but new cottages, from the dreary cheapness of the Queen Anne variety to the ambitious imitation Colonial confused and complicated with other styles and periods. Still I knew in the region of my brain given over to facts that there were such old homes in New Jersey as Dorothy described theirs to be. My acquaintance with Dorothy was more or less fortuitous. We were not by nature strongly marked affinities. We had met in a dull, healthy New England seaside resort and had discovered that we were remotely connected—that we had, in fact, a Great-great-aunt Augusta in common. This Aunt Augusta, of whom I recalled an interesting miniature, had once lived in the New Jersey house, which Dorothy always urged as a reason for my visiting it. I must admit that the burden of sustaining the acquaintance was borne by Dorothy. She was one of those gentle Philistines having a naïve desire to know what she called "interesting people," and the fact that I was an artist of modest achievements gave a sort of fictitious value to my society. Dorothy never failed to label me to her well-dressed, decorous friends, who invariably followed the matter up by asking with hopeful eyes fixed upon

mine, "What style of picture do you paint, Miss Lorrimer?"

It was with an only partially resigned sense of giving myself up to two days and a half of this that I finally accepted Dorothy's urgent invitation. We went out on the Saturday morning train together. Dorothy had been in overnight for the theatre. She was a devoted attendant of the conventional drama and could tell you the plots and plays and the names of the actors who had figured in them for years back. We talked first of the play she had seen the night before, then eventually we got upon the subject of Aunt Augusta.

"You know, Aunt Augusta was what is called rather a gay lady," Dorothy observed, with evident relish. I perceived that by the process usual to minds of the Dorothy type she felt the improper to be legitimized by the lapse of years.

"Tell me about her," I urged. "I love having irregular ancestors. What did she do?"

"Oh, lots of things," replied Dorothy loosely. "She was what is called wild. Once when she was hunting her skirt caught on a thicket and pulled loose and she rode right on leaving her skirt behind her."

I laughed. "She was certainly a good sport. I don't detect anything especially naughty about that."

"And when she went to balls they said she was always the last to go and she always danced holes in her slippers."

Feeling that with that last anecdote we had got down to the level of the conventional ancestral tale I was disappointed. But what else could one expect from one of Dorothy's mild taste in matter and manner? "Was that the extent of her wildness?" I asked.

"Oh, dear, no," replied Dorothy, with a peculiar smile.

"What did she do that was so wicked?" I pursued, forced into an unnatural taste for headlines by the gentle boredom of Dorothy's society.

"It isn't so much what she *did*," began Dorothy, "as what she wanted to do."

"How is one informed upon her psychologic processes?" I wondered.

"I mean what she started out to do," began Dorothy. Then just at that moment an amiable fellow-townsmen of hers, coming through the car on his way from the smoker, discovered and joined us. So for the rest of the way we talked of the comparative disadvantages of New Jersey local railroads and of the unquestionable superiority of Willowdale—their residence—over other Jersey suburbs. The fact that it was farther away and "a little off the line of travel" was set down as one of these. Of course the train connections were inconvenient, but then, as the male friend expressed it, they "drew a nicer class of people."

The ancestral home of Aunt Augusta, I realized as we approached it, was certainly not lacking in atmosphere. It was a fine old Colonial house set among great trees. The warm color of the soil gave it a cheerful character and the malarial Passaic catching the light between the trees made an agreeable note in the picture. Inside, the house was delightful with the simple, beautiful proportions of its period and its rich old furniture and in spite of the banal additions of the present inhabitants. In some parts of the house the glass in the windows was so old and imperfect that it was almost opaque and Dorothy pointed out two old port-holes.

After a brief personally conducted tour of the rooms, Dorothy took me to my own. It was rather small, cheerfully filled with sunshine, and furnished, like the rest of the house, with old furniture. I had barely glanced at it when Mrs. Brewster, who had followed us up, knocked on the door to remind us that luncheon was ready and that if we were to take that long drive afterward we must come down at once.

It was not until we had returned from our drive and I had gone up to my room after tea that I made my discovery. It was almost dark and there was no light in the room. As I entered it a strange sensation began stealing over me—the sensation of my dream . . . I looked about—the

small room with the old-fashioned furniture and—yes, the old chest of drawers with the winking brass knobs! I cannot describe the sense of fear that crept over me as that fact dawned upon me. I actually felt it at the roots of my hair.

Well, I had found my room at last! Now what was to happen in it? To carry the thing to its logical conclusion something must happen—something that I had been waiting for, that, in some unpleasant preordained sort of way, I had been born to have happen to me. But all this only went through my brain vaguely. My first impulse—which I acted upon immediately—was to search for the matches. Finding none I rushed out into the hall in something approaching a panic to demand them of Dorothy, who was just ascending the stairs, her arms laden with wraps. She came in and lighted the lamp for me. I own to remaining upon the threshold until this function had been performed. Then I realized that this fated room—if fated it was—had one quality different from most rooms of alarming association as described in fiction—it was not remote or cut off from the rest of the house. Dorothy's room was right next to it.

Dorothy having adjusted the lamp-wick to a safe height, turned to me with a smile. "Did I tell you—no, I think mother came in just as I was going to tell you—that this was once Aunt Augusta's room?"

I forced an answering smile. "No, you didn't tell me." I began to feel little chills creeping down my spine.

"Yes, indeed." Dorothy looked about the room reminiscently. "It was out of that window that she tried to escape."

"To escape!" I echoed. I stood staring in the direction she had indicated. My emotions of horror as expressed upon my face evidently conveyed to Dorothy only a sense of probable perplexity on my part, for she added:

"I forgot I hadn't told you the story. I will after dinner."

"But what," I pursued uneasily, "was she escaping from?"

Dorothy's face assumed the guarded expression of one skirting the delicate edge of an impropriety. "From her husband."

"What had he done to her?" I questioned, vague but unpleasant images arising in my mind.

"Oh, nothing. She just didn't like him. Her mother made her marry Uncle Cyrus. But I mustn't tell it to you this way, piecemeal. Wait and let me tell you the whole story after dinner." As she was turning to go she added, "You know there is a door into my room behind that curtain. We can have it open if you wish."

Although I had counted upon the excuse of a before-dinner rest to release me from the gentle continuous dribble of Dorothy's conversation, I answered with alacrity, "Why, I believe I do."

Dorothy went to the door. It stuck at first. After a little pulling it opened. "We had it cut through when mother was sick," she explained. "Eunice had to sleep in here and she was nervous about being alone."

"Isn't she alone now?" I asked, remembering a quaint room with a sloping ceiling that had been pointed out to me as Eunice's.

"Yes, quite away from the rest of us. She seems to have got all over her nervousness. I suppose it was one of those temporary states that one gets in from time to time."

Dorothy passed on into her own room and lighted her lamp. I set about unpacking my valise. Without analyzing my motives I avoided putting my things away in the highboy, using instead a harmless-looking bureau of the black walnut period. There was something wicked-looking about that tall piece of furniture, the little brass knobs were like so many winking, malignant eyes. I shrank, too, from the picture that hung over it—a portrait of an old gentleman with a lowering type of countenance. I wondered if he could be Aunt Augusta's husband. I called out to Dorothy, "Whose por-

trait is this over the highboy?" And absurd as it may seem I felt a little goose-flesh shiver pass over me as I mentioned that supernaturally familiar piece of furniture.

"That is Uncle Cyrus," Dorothy called back. "Doesn't he look cross!"

"I don't wonder Aunt Augusta wanted to run away from him," I answered. "Was she just running away, or was she going to elope?"

But Dorothy only replied, "Wait until I can tell you the whole story."

But in the evening some neighbors dropped in. The conversation was general and desultory and so it happened that Dorothy and I were again in our respective rooms for the night and the story had not been told. By that time I had begun to feel that I did not want to hear it until daylight and I hoped that Dorothy had forgotten about it.

I had just begun to undress when a disquieting incident happened: the kerosene lamp began to go out. I communicated the fact to Dorothy, hurrying after a hasty knock into her room.

"That stupid Hilda! I suppose she forgot to fill it," Dorothy apologized. "It seems impossible to get a servant with a memory any more. Do you mind undressing by candlelight?"

I assured her with what I felt to be an obviously strained effect of politeness that I was particularly fond of candles, but my heart sank when Dorothy set a single candle in an old silver candlestick upon the bureau, remarking, "There doesn't seem to be but one."

The small spark of light only seemed to add to the ominous obscurity of the shadows. I began to undress, struggling against the sense of apprehension creeping over me. No doubt when I was in bed with the covers ignominiously drawn up about my head so that I could not see that malevolent piece of mahogany I would forget my fears in sleep. Yet as I glanced over at the old four-post bedstead I felt a well-defined distaste to entering it. Dorothy had left the door into her room partially open. Reassured by that

consciousness I continued slowly to undress. It seemed to me that the candle burned lower and lower in its socket. I was seated on the edge of the bed in the act of removing my slippers when a sound as sharp as a pistol shot broke the stillness. It came from the direction of the highboy. We are all familiar with the cracking sounds that emanate irrelevantly from old furniture. It is often startling under ordinary conditions, but coming at that moment, although I had explained its origin to myself almost immediately, it set my heart beating like a triphammer. However, I went on undressing. But as I was standing before the bureau taking the pins out of my hair—a little to one side of the mirror, for I felt a disinclination to meeting my own eyes in the glass—another sound came from the direction of the highboy—a sound like a distinct rap upon wood. I called out to Dorothy, making a heroic effort to speak naturally:

"Did anyone knock on your door?"

"No, I didn't hear any knock," she replied.

I went over to my own door and opened it. There was no one there. I closed the door and continued the process of undressing. I was standing in the middle of the room in my nightdress when the thing happened which seems to me so monstrous, so inexplicable, that I shrink even now from speaking of it. As I stood there—the room was almost dark, so dim and uncertain was the light of the candle—I thought I saw the mahogany highboy *move*.

I stood and stared, refusing to believe the evidence of my eyes. Then I saw that it was no mistake—the thing was moving *in my direction*! My heart jumped into my throat. I could not move. It was the nightmare sensation of my dream. I tried to call Dorothy, but for some reason I was afraid to speak and my voice stuck in my throat. I felt that she was infinitely remote, out of my reach. At last with a violent effort of will I managed to speak: "I am coming in there a moment."

And I started to go into her room. At that moment the candle went out. Then in the streak of light coming from Dorothy's room I saw the highboy slowly, noiselessly, creeping toward me.

I saw it coming nearer and nearer—slowly, heavily, implacably—in another moment it would be between me and the door, and still I stood there paralyzed. Then, somehow, with one supreme effort, I rushed past that hideous piece of furniture into Dorothy's room.

She looked around at me in surprise. "Why, you look pale. Has anything startled you?"

"I think," I gasped, "that that knock startled me."

"I didn't hear any knock," replied Dorothy.

I sank on Dorothy's bed breathless, but still preserving the instinct to conceal my fear. "I believe I was half-asleep as I was undressing," I prevaricated.

"Would you like to sleep in here?" offered Dorothy, moved by a heaven-sent impulse. "Eunice often used to when she got nervous."

I accepted eagerly: "If you don't mind." It was a moment before I recovered enough to suggest, "Wouldn't we better close the door into my room? It might make a draft."

When she had closed the door and was braiding her long, mouse-colored hair for the night she exclaimed: "Oh, shall I tell you about Aunt Augusta now?"

I shuddered. "Let's leave it until morning now," I dissimulated. But before she put out the light I asked one question: "Was the highboy in the room when Aunt Augusta had it?"

"Yes, indeed. Uncle Cyrus's family brought it from England. It has a history. In fact, it was that highboy—"

I interrupted Dorothy hastily: "I don't believe I want to hear any of it tonight."

Although, as always, the daylight served to make the fears of the night more remote, it did not lessen my recollection of the horror. I contrived to

slip away in the course of the morning and despatch a telegram to Pinkie Wright, who has the studio next to mine, asking her to send me a peremptory telegram summoning me to New York that night. It came in the afternoon. Pinkie never fails one in an emergency. The kind Brewsters expressed the deepest regret that I could not carry out my original plan of remaining until Monday morning. But even in the cheerful Sunday sunshine I could not face the thought of another twilight in that dreadful room. I was afraid of it even in the daytime. And so it came to pass that it was during a placid walk beside the picturesque, malarial river that Dorothy finally told me the story of Aunt Augusta.

"You know that it is Aunt Augusta, not Uncle Cyrus, who is your relative," Dorothy began. "We are descended from Uncle Cyrus, and so," she concluded—with what was for her a rare touch of esprit—"I don't have to be responsible for her wild doings. Her sins have descended upon *your* head."

Dorothy did not know how I shuddered at that harmless jest. "She was always doing things that scandalized the family," Dorothy went on, and I began to feel an uncomfortable sense of parallel, although my scandalous behavior, which it had been prophesied for me would result in some vague but certain catastrophe, had been confined to the choice of painting and studio life in place of the innocuous tastes and conventional pursuits of the rest of my family. Dorothy, by the way, would have been intensely congenial with my relatives.

"Aunt Augusta was so wild," Dorothy continued, "that they felt the only thing to do with her was to marry her off as soon as possible. Some harum-scarum ne'er-do-well in the same town was running after her and she seemed to prefer him to more reputable gentlemen. So when Uncle Cyrus took a fancy to her and asked for her hand they were only too thankful, and married her off to him at once, although he was at least fifteen years older than she was."

"He doesn't look as if he had ever been young," I remarked, remembering the portrait.

"I believe he was what is called a hard man," recited Dorothy, "and they say she led him a dance." Dorothy always conversed in familiar phrases. "Finally rumors came to Uncle Cyrus's ears that she was having secret meetings with a young officer stationed over at Morristown, and he began watching her. At last he found out that she was planning to get out of her window one night—whether to elope or just for an adventure will never be known—and Uncle Cyrus hid himself in the shrubberies under her window."

"Was it the room I had?" I interrupted.

Dorothy nodded. "And the highboy"—I shuddered even in the daylight at the mention of it—"the highboy you asked me about figured most strangely in the story." I waited breathlessly. "She had planned, being a daring lady, to go down a rope-ladder," Dorothy went on. "She was to lower a rope down to the young officer who was waiting for her below—they discovered it all from a letter they found afterwards—then she was to draw up the ladder and fasten it to the window, and let herself down. Well, the first part of the plan went off all right. It was after she had the ladder up there and was casting about, I suppose, for something to tie it to, that she evidently hit upon the highboy, which was heavy and probably stood near the window as it does now. Anyway she tied the ladder fast to it; then, whether she thought she heard someone coming and got tangled up in it, or whether it was some accident that happened when she tried to get out—no one knows, but in some way she contrived to pull that great piece of furniture over on top of herself."

"How horrible!" I exclaimed. "I wish you hadn't told me."

Dorothy was obviously delighted with her effect. She proceeded briskly with her grisly speculations: "I suppose as the time passed and nothing happened Uncle Cyrus began to be

afraid that she had given him the slip, and so he went in search of her. In any case he found her pinned under the highboy and she lived only a few minutes after they took her out."

"What a ghastly story!" I cried. "Poor Aunt Augusta! And how can you bear to have that hideous piece of furniture about!"

"Why, we never think of it," replied Dorothy unimaginatively. "We haven't always known it, anyway. The story was told to us just a few years ago by an old aunt of father's who came to visit us. The only one in the family who seems to have any feeling about it is Eunice, and she claims to be psychic."

Wondering if Eunice could possibly have cause for any such exaggerated sense of horror as I had in connection with that old piece of mahogany, I nevertheless felt no desire to inquire into the matter.

When we got back to the house and were sitting in the great living-room waiting for the carriage that was to bear me to the station, Mrs. Brewster, who was a warm-hearted, motherly soul, made me a generous offer.

"I have been so interested in all that Dorothy has been telling me about our relationship I have been wondering if you wouldn't like to have that old highboy—the one that stands in the room you occupied—for your studio. Dorothy says you are so fond of old furniture, and we have so much we have scarcely room for it."

With a violent effort to conceal my horror I thanked Mrs. Brewster for her kind offer, but hastened to assure her that I had no room for the highboy.

"I offered it to Eunice," Mrs. Brewster remarked. "But she didn't seem to want it. She says she prefers modern furniture. It seems odd now that there is such a rage for old pieces." Then she added cordially, "You are very welcome to it any time you have a place for it."

I thanked Mrs. Brewster with all the warmth I could muster and managed to restrain myself from insisting that I should never, in any circum-

stances, have room for it. But from night in that awful room with that
time to time I wonder what would gruesome highboy.
have happened if I had spent the I have never dreamed of it since.



THE PATH TO SANKOTY

By Bliss Carman

IT winds along the headlands
Above the open sea—
The lonely moorland footpath
That leads to Sankoty.

The crooning sea spreads sailless
And gray to the world's rim,
Where hang the reeking fog-banks
Primordial and dim.

There fret the ceaseless currents,
And the eternal tide
Chafes over hidden shallows
Where the white horses ride.

The wistful, fragrant moorlands
Whose smile bids panic cease,
Lie treeless and cloud-shadowed
In grave and lonely peace.

Across their flowering bosom,
From the far end of day
Blow clean the great soft moor-winds
All sweet with rose and bay.

A world as large and simple
As first emerged for man,
Cleared for the human drama,
Before the play began.

O well the soul must treasure
The calm that sets it free—
The vast and tender skyline,
The sea-turn's wizardry,

Solace of swaying grasses,
The friendship of sweet-fern—
And in the world's confusion
Remembering, must yearn

To tread the moorland footpath
That leads to Sankoty,
Hearing the field-larks shrilling
Beside the sailless sea.

THE WOMEN YOU HAVE LOVED

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

AT least in his wrath, King David erred. Of women I do not pretend to a knowledge, but all men are not liars.

Our modern industrial system, of course, is founded upon a theory of commercial diplomacy which makes most business procedure move along the lines of deception—and the lines of deception are always the lines of least resistance. That is why there is a prejudice against ancestors who have indulged in "trade." Socially, also, in the limited sense of the adverb, polite prevarication is the greatest known restraint to the powerful human instinct for murder. But both Business and Society are frankly artificial, and there the falsehood is tacitly understood and discounted by every player in the game. It is of the primitive emotions and impulsive actions that I would speak, and, because only in the primitive emotions and impulsive actions does the true individuality of a genus express itself, I maintain that the male human being is fundamentally honest.

Sometimes, quite naturally, this honesty is called dishonesty—as when a poor man, being hungry, openly and honestly and without payment seizes a loaf of bread which, according to common standards, belongs to a baker—but that confusion of terms is experienced only by the players in the artificial games of Business and Society. For the rest, when a man is hurt, he cries out; when he is hungry, he eats hard; when he nurses a grudge, he worships revenge, and, be he the sublimest liar in the Kingdom of Trade, when you rouse his anger he tells you his utter opinion of you.

This being so, and the farther we descend from artificiality, and the deeper we get into the real nature of man, the simpler and more honest we find him to be, why is it—I ask in all humility before the silent Sphinx of the Passions—why is it that in Love—which is the simplest and strongest, the oldest and the most natural passion of them all—why is it that in Love we find enthroned and triple-crowned the Master Lie?

I hear you deny it. Since the days when Chivalry set it up and established its dominion, the whole sex has, collectively, been as busily engaged in denying that it is a lie as they have been, individually and secretly, busily engaged in proving it to be nothing else. My question, then, I cannot answer, but I can, I think, force you at least to admit—to your own hidden hearts, of course; it would never do for you to grant it publicly!—that the lie is a lie.

I mean the Doctrine of the Grand Passion; the Bugaboo of One-Love-in-a-Life.

It is not necessary to state that this theory is everywhere acknowledged among men who marry, and by all men who marry to all women whom they hope to marry. If, as the Bromides are fond of saying, marriage and the family form the cornerstone of our civilization, then the quarry out of which that cornerstone was hewn is the idea, always declared to her whom we wed, that she is the one real love of our life and that no other is possible. The thing has become part and parcel of our modern thought, and there is, therefore, no limit to its influence upon our national life. A half-clever psychologist could

show, beyond the palest shade of doubt, that upon it equally rest the manner in which we strike our matches and elect our Presidents, part our hair and dig the Panama Canal. Seize any male American in his sober moments, or any Englishman in any moment when he is not sober, and he will say to you:

"Of course, a fellow has his passing affairs, but, I tell you, win it or lose it, the Real Thing happens only once in a man's life."

And how is one to know it—this Real Thing—when it does happen? In the realm of the sensations the single test is sensation: you know because you feel certain of it!

Enough there to prove my case: *How often have you felt certain?*

I do not ask you to review your flirtations, your admirations, your light flutterings of heart. I ask you, in your own soul, only to count over the catalogue of those occasions when, alone as you are now, you have said to yourself:

"This is She for whom I was destined; this is she who was fashioned for me, and for whom I was fashioned, before the world was created, or the morning stars sang together; this is the Grand Passion."

How many times?

Send your heart back, my friend, over the now long and dusty road—back to where it was a mere pathway pressed only by truant feet, bare and tiny—where it curved gently, imperceptibly downward from the hilltop, under the interlacing boughs of black-oak and Norway pine; when the long, damp ferns pressed about it on every side, and the short, velvety moss covered it; when the scented wild roses peeped at you from the thicket, and through the green trees overhead your young eyes looked straight into heaven. Do you remember those days now? Nay, rather, will you ever forget them? Yesterday is only a dream of the night and tomorrow will be but a vision that fleeth with the morning; yet that other day, that first day—on it the sun never sets, the shadows never lengthen.

And, at its noon, there stands a little

figure which gathers to itself all the brightness of that time as a burning-glass gathers the sun: a little figure in a stiffly starched muslin frock that reaches scarcely to her knees, with a pink sash about her waist and a pink ribbon tied to the long braid of brown hair that falls nearly to her narrow hips—a girl, a child, with rosy lips and large eyes, blue and frank and questioning.

Do you remember when, that rainy day in school, you first became aware of her? You had been sure that girls were a nuisance until then, and why so sensible a man as your father, for instance, had married one—except that your mother was better than any girl in the world—you could not for the life of you imagine. You were being punished, for you had been whispering to Skinny Thomas, or throwing spit-balls at Pud Yocum—you forget just what—and in all the flood of faces that your own burning face looked out upon only one was not jeering, only one pitied you: the face of the Girl with the Pink Ribbons.

It came slowly in those days—far more slowly, alas! than in the years that followed—but it came at last. With hesitant hand a week later you tossed her a penciled note; with frightened feet you walked with her from school, and with red, rebellious cheeks you met the mockery of your comrades. Then, finally, you gave her a flower—it was sweet william, wasn't it?—from your mother's garden back of the house (there are no such gardens now!), and she wrote in your autograph album these immortal lines:

Roses are red and violets blue;
Sugar's sweet, and so are you;
If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two!

In all your life has any poetry by any master so thrilled you since? You reverted to your outgrown fairy-tales, and knew why the Prince could face the Dragon for the Princess's sake; you took up "Redheart Dick, the King of Cowboys," and longed for Indians from whom to rescue—Her. You did not speak; you dared not

speak, and when you played "Clap-in-clap-out" at Pearl Richard's party you even avoided Her, for then there was no kiss, no hand-clasp. Glances sufficed, and Love did not then require the baser metal of exchange. But you had found the Grand Passion.

You had found it—and how you lost it you do not even remember! There was no climactic conclusion—there never is; no final curtain amid calcium-lightning and thunder manufactured in the wings—the only certain death for love is gradual decay. Like all beautiful flowers, it just faded. The swimming season came on again, or the girl went to the city for a visit, and your heart refused to break.

And then . . . Let's see. Oh, yes, and then, after an interval of boyhood, there came your first dance and first dress-suit, and, for quite an evening, you were so sure that Beatrice McBride was Destiny that you would certainly have told her so had not Clarence Brugh's sister brought home from New York that ample Mrs. Southwick with the red hair.

What, you won't confess to a married woman? Well, I will. I think I never suffered more terribly in my life. I must have been quite fifteen then, and she was not a day under the hoary age of twenty-eight, and had never spoken to me. But it was awful to think the long Byronic thoughts that I thought and to know how fast beyond my control those thoughts were hurrying me to hell. Antony was no more a mystery, and the early poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox—I found my father hiding them on the top shelf!—were as unambiguous as "Horatius at the Bridge." I had not then read Balzac, but I understood what he meant by his "Femme de Trente Années."

What saved us from all this—you and me—was our going to boarding-school, whence we came home flaunting pipes and the idea that we were devilish fellows and that all women were gay birds anyhow. Surely, you will admit that. And surely, too, you will remember what happened when, at college, you put the twin theories to the test.

She was in the chorus of "The Lime and the Leek"—second row, third from the end; not that girl with the crimson cap, but the blond next her, the one in blue—and for quite a time you couldn't believe that it was really you at whom she was smiling. You had heard about fellows managing it—there was Holland, for instance, and Grayson, but they were both juniors, and you had never dared to hope that you would be so lucky. In fact, you didn't dare to hope it yet. You nearly dislocated your vertebrae in an endeavor to assure yourself that the fortunate man was not somewhere behind you. Then, convinced of this, you decided that it must be sheer coincidence that her smile should answer yours. You grinned, however—covertly—so that, if it was coincidence, the people behind you wouldn't notice—and the chorus-girl grinned her answer frankly enough.

How your heart stood still at that moment! How the hot blood rushed to your beardless face and left you gaping! This was Life with the capital letter! Here was the Real World, and you were a Man of it. In that instant, whether you were twenty or twenty-two, you attained your majority, you "came of age."

And next? Well, next, you crept back to the cobbled alley which opened that gate to an alluring paradise—the stage-door.

There were other people waiting, mostly older people with opera-hats and gray mustaches, who were abominably at ease. But you weren't at ease; you tried to mimic their manner, but you couldn't, and, though it was a mild night, you shivered. It took hours and hours for the door to open and you suddenly felt the horrors of solitude. Someone was coming out—but it was only a man—and perhaps, after all, she *had* been smiling at another; the old buck here in the inerness had been sitting just behind you. Again the door opened and several girls came out together; so many and walking rapidly through the darkness that you could not recognize any of them. You were sure, when they had gone by.

that she must have been one of them.

But you waited, anyhow.

Under a lamp-post you looked at your watch. It was twenty minutes after eleven; you would wait until the half-hour. More girls appeared—and, gathered up by one or another of your waiting elders, disappeared. You waited until you were sure it was midnight, and when you found it was eleven thirty-three, you decided to give her twelve minutes more.

And then the door opened again and there was a touch on your arm and a girl you had never seen was saying "Hello" to you, and the Girl You Had Never Seen was—or at least bore an illusive likeness to—the Girl You Were Waiting For.

Of course, you recovered from the shock. Of course, you remembered all you had heard about how different people looked "on the stage" and off. Equally, of course, you took the girl to the café she readily named, proud to be seen with her; trembling lest you should betray to her your inexperience of Stage People, as you called them; fearful lest—with you at the end of your allowance—she should order "wine"—by which you meant champagne—because all the "Stage People" you had ever read of drank nothing but "wine"; and, finally, grateful that, though she ate ravenously and ruinously, she drank only—and sparingly—of beer.

You were in a dream of delight. Even if her grammar was curious to your ear and her slang strange to your vocabulary, she talked of the wonderland of the Stage—of nothing else, indeed—let you walk all the way home with her and, at the boarding-house door, said:

"Good night. I've had a *lovely* time. Come 'round and see the show tomorrow evening. Good night!"

If you did not go back, it was because, next morning, when you came to think it over, you remembered that a streak of grease-paint had been left behind her ear. Or if you did go back—and I did—you remembered the

same thing a few mornings later. In either case, there was but one end: the Grand Passion, you assured yourself, had once more eluded you. As a matter of fact it had merely been and gone.

You were out of college before it called once more. There was, to be sure, that affair with your room-mate's sister, beginning at Class Day, but there the dream lasted scarcely longer than the candles at the next night's dinner, and that August the little passage with Griselda Baker in the White Mountains proved to be only a Summer flirtation: you discovered it was nothing more at the precise moment you discovered that Griselda was not really a cousin of the Vanastrens, but a head "saleslady" in Macy's. Moreover, badly as you lost your head next Winter in that sordid episode in Paris, that was never anything but sordid. So, not until you had gone to work at the office, and met Ivy Dennison at the Miltons' tea, and become engaged to her a week later, were you quite sure that you had found the One Love of Your Life again.

You were quite sure then, however. Honestly, weren't you? You told her so; you said it deliberately, and after fully five minutes' thought. When she broke the engagement you were certain that she had also broken your heart.

Thus ever the chase. You have so far been admirably frank, my friend. I thank you—and now let us try a final test of frankness. What of your marriage? If ever you were convinced that you had snatched the Grand Passion, that was the time. What, then, of your marriage?

One of two things: Either you married happily and the great romance gave slowly, but completely, away to honest affection and fine comradeship; or else you married unhappily, and, first unconsciously, then guiltily, and, finally with high abandon, you resumed the old pursuit and leaped the fence from the hot highway into the meadows and among the daisies again, still following the eternal butterfly of your dream. The vision must die before you do, or you must follow

it until you stumble and fall into—your grave.

Sometimes I think there is more than a word to be said for the Mohammedan idea of paradise. In itself, the pursuit of the Ideal—I had almost said of any ideal—is ennobling and beautiful; it is only the means of pursuit that may become debasing and ugly. And since we may not find all of our ideals here, I, for one, like to think that they await us, to reward our lifelong service—There.

My doctrine, then, is not pessimistic. The pessimist would hold the belief that the Grand Passion is possible, but that for the one who achieves it thousands must wear out hearts and hopes and lives in a vain pursuit. That

would be a theory agreeable to the law of the survival of the fittest—and would be scientifically correct. In spite of their fine phrases about every one of us finding the Great Love once in his life, it is upon that compromise that all men secretly pin their souls. Unless they put aside the dream entirely, each lives and works and dies in the hope that his will be the Chosen Heart.

Well, you have made an honest confession to me; it were ill of me did I not confess as honestly as you: I have so far divorced intellectual conviction from emotional certainty that I do not permit my philosophical dogmas to affect my inspirational conduct. I, too, believe in the Golden Girl, and I, too, consider myself the Thousandth Man.



O HEART, THOU HAST LOVE TO GAIN

By Sylvia Florance

O HEART, thou hast Love to gain!
 The blushing bud recks not of thieving bees;
 The limpid lakes know naught of storm-tossed seas;
 And dawning day fears not the night of rain!
 O Heart, thou hast Love to gain!

O Heart, thou hast Hope to keep!
 The full-blown blossom opens in the sun,
 The warp and woof of life are quickly spun;
 And souls that sowed, start bravely forth to reap.
 O Heart, thou hast Hope to keep!

O Heart, thou hast Life to hold!
 On sapless stem no perfumed petal grows;
 Dread darkness follows as the sunlight goes;
 And Death, delirquent, lingers in the cold.
 O Heart, thou hast Life to hold!

IN PRAISE OF "THE SAME"

A BACCHIC POEM

By John Kendrick Bangs

SOME sing of champagne with its sparkle and fizz,
And others of claret and beer.
Some poets love ale and aver that it is
The surest forerunner of cheer.
The gods of Olympus on nectar were mad,
By Hebe served, barmaid of fame;
But if you ask me for the cup that is glad,
I'll call for a glass of "The Same."

Let others drink moselle, sauterne or rare port,
I'll never deny that they're fine.
Chianti's a liquid of pretty fair sort,
And Hock has a flavor divine.
I revel sometimes in the green of the mint,
Sometimes in the cognac aflame,
But despite its aroma, its flavor or tint
Let mine be a mug of "The Same."

There's rye and there's Scotch, and the Dew of the Hills,
There's lightning from old Jersey's plain.
There's that in straight Bourbon that speedily kills
All symptoms of worry and pain;
And Burgundy too, when it's nutty and old,
Brings joy to the halt and the lame—
On these if you choose go and squander your gold,
But bring me a mug of "The Same."

ENVOY

Ho, Muse, give your order—whatever it is
You'll find I'm a follower game!
What's that? A carafe of cold water? Gee whizz!
Well—bring me a tub of "The Same."



WE blame a woman for her vanity, and find fault with her when she hasn't any.

HER FIRST MARRIAGE

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

FOR a year the widow had dwelt in the shadow of her grief—had lived from day to day without definite plan. On the anniversary of her husband's death she sat down before a wood fire in her sitting-room to take stock of the past and provide for the future. Her memory, reaching back across the twelve months' chasm, grappled with the scenes of the funeral.

"How he would have hated it all, if he could have known about it!" she exclaimed. "He could never endure stereotyped affairs. And yet—I suppose it would have amused him."

She caught herself wishing to smile, and checked the impulse from a sense of duty; but on second thought gave it rein.

"Why shouldn't I smile?" she asked. "Surely there's no need for me to be solemn over something which would have provoked his mirth."

Then the thought struck her that probably he would have blamed her on that very score; he had always been illogical, had Redpath. She smiled again—this time involuntarily. She had known him so well!

She leaned forward and readjusted a log in the fireplace. The flames, shooting suddenly up, shone redly on the brass ends of the old-fashioned andirons. They had bought those andirons, Redpath and she, on a day following the disposal of one of his songs, and had quarreled thereafter concerning the choice of a restaurant in which to dine. It seemed to her, as she remembered, that they had not dined out a dozen times in all their years of married life without splitting over some such trivial matter.

Yet the ten years had been happy ones in the main; the worst of the antenuptial prophecies had not been verified. The young wife had learned to cope with the more violent phases of the "artistic temperament," as exemplified in her husband. She had found that a calm but unobtrusive silence was her best weapon when in fits of depression he bewailed the unhappy fact that he was alive, swore, stamped his feet childishly, and now and then relieved his feelings by smashing some inexpensive piece of crockery. At the very first these spasms had alarmed her; but she had come to the conclusion, later, that they were only the explosions of a mind which had never outgrown certain tricks of its infancy, and never would outgrow them. Redpath had always been pathetically sorry after an outburst, showing his repentance by returning to the attitude of courtship days. To do him justice he had never lost completely the manner of a lover; that manner had merely gone into temporary eclipse on occasions when nervousness overbalanced his slender allowance of common sense.

His aloofness, and his bitter suspicion of his fellow-men had been harder for his wife to bear. She had understood to some extent his desperate fear of poverty, for she had gathered from his chance sayings an idea of the almost penniless years through which he had passed on his way to public notice; but she had not been able to excuse his habitual search for solitude. She herself liked "company," and it had been difficult to suit her life to that of a confirmed recluse. Although Redpath had rarely voiced specific objections to

social activity his position had been hostile; his talent for getting himself disliked by people in general had nearly amounted to genius.

In strange contrast to these qualities had been his generosity and his lack of jealousy in its crudest form. He had invariably furnished money to the limit of his ability; and Leila's admirers—especially the Other Man, who had almost succeeded in marrying her and who had remained single for her sake—had failed to arouse in him either suspicion or hatred. In fact, he had shown symptoms of liking the Other Man.

"Why do you care for John Raymond?" she had once asked, a trifle piqued by so odd a fancy. "I shouldn't have supposed he'd attract you particularly; you don't like business men."

"Raymond," he replied, "is a relief to me because of his absolute sanity. He indulges in neither moral nor immoral preachments, and refuses to toot his own horn. Further, he's the only successful man I've ever known or heard of who don't talk shop out of hours. He acts on me like a cold shower-bath in Midsummer. I regain my sense of proportion when I'm with him."

"But—don't you sometimes feel jealous? I'm very fond of John, you know."

"My dear Leila, it hasn't occurred to me to mistrust you. I'd as soon think of playing the Fifth Nocturne in ragtime."

He had shown in that speech his better side—the side that she could respect as well as love. For, aside from his essential decency toward her, she had liked most in him his devotion to his art. Even in his days of failure he had declined to prostitute music—to compose tinpan drivel for the dollars which he so sorely needed; and a moderate prosperity had not tempted him from his determination. Nor had he ignored the public taste altogether. He had avoided extremes, and contrived to make his melodies reasonably popular without forfeiting his artistic self-respect.

"The power to compose stuff that most people can't understand is no sign of genius," was his opinion. "It's generally a sign that the composer's a fool. Once in a while some musical barbarian gains the dear public's affection by batting said public in the eye; but as a rule a few gentle pats on the back are more efficacious. One needn't bow down and rub one's nose on the pavement, though."

Yes, Redpath had been quite sure of the wisdom of his course. His vanity—his colossal vanity! The widow, smiling once more at her memories, wondered if there was any subject about which he would not have felt himself competent to pronounce a final opinion. True, he had not often troubled to go out of his own sphere; but that was only more conclusive evidence of his self-centredness. He had viewed everything unmusical with a scorn sufficiently complete to excite admiration, unless it happened to beget scorn in return. There had been no sympathetic bond betwixt him and the majority of his kind; no hobby, shared by hundreds of others, which would have served to draw his mind, in periods of relaxation, away from itself. He had thought continually of his work, suffering intensely, if ridiculously, when long concentration had snapped the link that connects effort with production. Leila could shut her eyes, and, with the vision of the brain, see him wandering again through the rooms, his thin fingers a-twitch, and his lean, fallow face distorted into a ludicrous caricature by the stress of some fugitive inspiration. In like manner, she could hear the placid voice of the Other Man:

"Don't fuss; don't worry. He'll come out of it in a couple of days, and maybe the result will be a second 'Artemisia.'"

It was from Raymond, indeed, that she had got her first hint of the way to manage Redpath. The elder man had seemed to reciprocate the younger's liking; after the first shock of disappointment he had accorded his successful rival characteristic praise.

"Your husband deserves a great deal

of credit," he had said. "You won't think a bit of advice from me impertinent, Leila? Well, then, if ever the skein gets a bit tangled, remember these two things: first, Redpath has given much pleasure to many people through his music; second, he loves you."

And again:

"If you had married a stupid chap, my dear, I couldn't have forgiven you. Redpath is at least a personality. He allows one to expect the Unexpected."

Leila had not been entirely certain, at that time, of the Unexpected's charm for her; her interest in new achievements had been somewhat deadened by conflict with Redpath's varying moods. Now, however, she realized that much of the excitement in her life of the past decade had been due to that very element—to the hope that he would do something wonderful, to the fear lest the strain under which he labored might bring about a tragedy. When once she had learned to accept philosophically most of his petty idiosyncrasies of temper she had been able to feel some satisfaction in his work. It had pleased her to know that her husband was different from the common run. Had she chanced to love Raymond instead of Redpath she would not have experienced that special satisfaction; for Raymond was, by his own confession, a man of only average ability, untroubled by the lust for fame. She was therefore in the composer's debt for a unique emotion. He, who "had given much pleasure to many people through his music," had honored his wife by allowing her to share indirectly in his gifts. But was she bound to him in any other way? Would a ghost of the old love arise to vex her later life with vague misgivings and regrets? Redpath had been a personality; but how strong a one?

Weary of her chair by the fireside, she crossed the room, and turned the knob of a door which opened into the dimly-lighted hall. From regions above filtered down the sound of a mild, comfortable snore, having its source, she knew, in the nostrils of her aunt, whom

she had left nodding, earlier in the evening, over one of Miss Corelli's masterpieces. The aunt had been her companion since Redpath's death, and had bestowed upon her a sympathy unconsciously tempered by the sympathizer's secret belief in the providential character of the bereavement. Miss Agatha Wellington had concurred with the other relatives in judging her niece's marriage a mistake; her tears had swelled the briny fountain gushing up amid the remnants of the wedding feast. Redpath might have conquered her disapproval if he had cared to, but he had chosen instead to augment it by making outrageous comments on her pet theories.

"Your aunt needs a tonic," he had observed to Leila. "She's fed her brain so long on grass that a few grains of pepper will brace her up."

Leila had only shrugged in answer; she had known the uselessness of protesting. He would have met argument with argument, until he had spun for himself a paradoxical web intricate enough to amuse him for half a day, and totally out of proportion to the matter in hand. As for the possibility of inducing him to take his relatives-in-law seriously, his wife had given it up at the outset. He had become so accustomed to dislike that new enemies appealed to him as jokes. (When very tired he had often lost his sense of humor and grown querulous, but an attempt to convince him, in such a condition, of the wisdom of policy was also labor wasted.)

She stood for a moment in the doorway, then walked down the hall to the front-door. Throwing this open, she stepped out upon the porch. The raw air of early March smote sharply on her senses, rousing them to fresh activity; despite its revivifying power, however, it seemed subtly fetid, as though charged with the exhalations of thousands of city dwellers, turned loose by factory and shop to snatch a brief, anemic respite from unhealthy toil. Up and down the street the gaslights, in a double row, flickered feebly in the wind that penetrated to them through

broken panes of glass. The maple on the corner creaked, and tossed its naked limbs in grotesque abandon. To Redpath's widow the view was oppressive, sickening. The ancient grudge against solitude rankled in her breast.

Almost daily for more than a decade she had seen the same street, the same ill-tended lights, the same scrawny tree—this backwater in a neglected portion of an unattractive city. Redpath had liked the place, because, though quiet, it was not too far from the theatres to which he sometimes resorted "instead of contracting the morphine habit," or from the crowds in which he occasionally mingled, "in order to appreciate loneliness the better by contrast"; but to her it had been symbolic of the isolated mode of life that she looked upon with a truly feminine loathing, incomprehensible, in its intensity, to the weak male mind.

"Leila dear, the cold air is filling the house! *Please* come in—or else shut the door."

The plaintive call was Miss Wellington's. The good lady, awakened from pleasant dreams by the draught, had come to the head of the stairs, and was leaning over the banister, her flannel wrapper discreetly gathered at the throat with both hands.

"Yes, Aunt Agatha; I was just coming in."

Miss Wellington stayed at the stair-head to witness the closing of the door; a genteel yawn marked her departure. Leila lowered the hall light another quarter-inch, then went slowly back toward the sitting-room. After a few steps, however, she halted. On her left was the entrance to Redpath's room, and an impulse urged her to turn the key. . . .

She groped her way to the mantel. On her last visit, a week before, she had left a box of safety matches; as she struck one, she remembered Redpath's objection to them:

"Don't supply me with those things! It's hard enough to find a match without hunting for a foolish box to strike it

on. The human trousers are the only natural striking-place."

The gas in the droplight caught fire with a noise like a muffled shot. The shaded radiance dispelled the gloom gradually, lending softened outlines to the furniture. On a shelf in one corner an Eastern idol displayed an encouraging grin, as if joyous at being delivered again out of obscurity.

Leila looked around her cautiously, in the manner of one who, advancing into a room known to be empty, yet fears a hidden occupant. With all her accurate knowledge of her husband, she had felt at times the mysterious quality of his mind—of the part of his mind, that is, which had produced his music; and since his death she had rarely entered his workshop untouched by the superstitious notion that he might still be there in spirit. His piano had seemed always ready to break into melody beneath the influence of ghostly finger-tips.

There was only silence—a silence as prosaically cheerful as the idol's grin. The room was more homelike and intimate in the mellow, artificial glow than in dingy Winter daylight. The widow drew a relieved breath, and seated herself in a leather-covered arm-chair, facing the idol.

"Your wisdom is better than ours, sphinx of the Orient," she said. "You're eternally the same, and the axiom 'This too, O King, shall pass away,' doesn't afflict you with sadness."

Her gaze wandered to the bookcase, on top of which was piled a litter of Redpath's papers, held down by a silver-mounted skull. The papers had been collected from the floor, the table, the chairs, behind the pictures, even under the edge of the carpet; the composer had been in the habit of jotting down random notes on the first scrap within reach, and then thrusting the scrap away for future reference. He had usually forgotten the location of these treasures, but had been furiously angry if they were disturbed in the process of sweeping or dusting. The skull was an example of his bizarre taste in ornaments.

"What a boy!" thought Leila. "What a boy!"

She shifted from the arm-chair to a straight-backed one by the table. Resting her chin in her hand and her elbow on the table-edge, she looked at the objects scattered over the big blotter. There were in the collection writing materials—including a fountain-pen with a silver skeleton wrapped around it in filigree work—a silver cigarette-case, also decorated with the emblem of Death, an Italian dagger, and half-a-dozen photographs of singers and pianists. She drew forward one of the photographs; a large lady in a tight evening gown stared at her insolently, and at the foot was inscribed, with many flourishes:

"To My Very Dear Friend, Arnold Redpath. VERONICA."

Looking at the flashy picture, she wondered why Redpath had not loved some different woman—Veronica, or another of that type—who would have felt less deeply the responsibility of his love. He had worshiped beautiful voices, and there had been in him a streak of coarseness which might reasonably have been pandered to by buxom physical grandeur.

The idea startled her a trifle, because

it suggested that she was considering her husband from a detached standpoint. Had her active interest in him perished with the passage of a single year? She could examine his personal belongings without distress; she could even ask herself calmly whether it might not have been better if he had married someone else. . . . To this latter query, however, she was inclined to make a negative answer. She judged the experience to have been worth the trouble. On the other hand, her present indifference showed that she had paid heavily for benefits received by his great demands. Redpath had exhausted her capacity for violent emotion. There remained in her no passionate love to give to another man—her happiness thenceforth must depend on mediocre joys. She was rather thankful than sorry, for she felt that she had discharged her debt. The dead composer, part child, part charlatan and part genius, would be to her an entertaining memory; but he would not have the power to cast a shadow over the future.

After one more glance about the room, she took up Redpath's pen and began her letter to Raymond.



THE IRONY OF FATE

HEWITT—How did you come to be arrested in the park?

JEWETT—For walking on the grass.

"What were you doing on the grass?"

"I had to go on it to read the park regulations."



THE fellow who marries in haste usually doesn't have any leisure

AT THE CALL OF THE DAFFODILS

By Chester Raeburn

WALTON, half-turned from the table so that he could look seaward through the trellised openings of the veranda, felt a sensation of almost buoyant peace such as he had not known for months. In the hushed monotone of the surf, the quiet spread of the ocean, the far lift of the line of floating cloud, there was an elusive and yet very real prophecy of rest; and he realized suddenly how unutterably tired he was. At the same time the joylessness which he had lately accepted as the natural complexion of life seemed to lift away. Something hinted at a future, sunshiny, unbounded by care as the illimitable sky. He made no attempt to analyze the mood, but drifted with it. There was nothing to break in upon it; the few small tables still occupied were scattered at the other end of the gallery. The girl sitting opposite him was as quiet as he.

Unconsciously, his eyes were drawn to her face and it struck him with a new sense of youthfulness. She had always, during his courtship and even more after his marriage, been accepted as the "big sister," the acknowledged manager and stay of his family-in-law, and, since his wife's long illness, of his own household. Something now seemed to change his point of view, or to disclose to him that his point of view had been changed. Possibly the long months of wearing anxiety had aged him more rapidly—had carried him past her. Perhaps it was merely a color given to their relations by the trivial experiences of the day. He had taken the lead—borne her off for a brief rest from housekeeping and

nursing, and she had deferred with a degree of feminine softness he had not noticed in her before. The new mood fitted her wonderfully well. Without trying to dissect it, or even to define it, he was conscious of a difference and of a pleasure in it.

She turned, and her eyes met his with a frank, slight smile that had no smallest tinge of embarrassment.

"Isn't it nice, Harry?" she said; "almost like Summer again."

"Isn't it?" he assented. He laid his hand over hers, which was resting on the table, and she recognized it by a tiny movement. After a moment a shadow of pain crossed his face.

"But it seems wrong to be happy in it," he went on; "I keep thinking how poor little Beth would enjoy all this. A picnic by the sea was always her idea of the sum of happiness."

"Don't," she said, taking his hand softly in her steady, gentle fingers and then releasing it. "You must not feel that way. You know the best way you can make her happy tonight is to let her know you have been happy. And you have to keep up, for her sake as well as your own."

He made a slight gesture of weary acquiescence. The girl went on quietly:

"You are wearing yourself out, Harry, watching by her so much. You ought to get away oftener than you do."

"But when I know she just counts the time by the minutes I am with her" His eyes filled, and he stopped.

"I know. . . ." She laid her hand on his. "Then, you see, you

must not break down. It may be a long time yet before she gets well."

Another ear than his perhaps would not have detected the slight hesitant change in the last words. "Before she gets well. . . ." He knew that was not what the future held. There lay the black weariness that was crushing him. Days and nights of torturing strain—then a dim horror, and beyond it a blank of life stretching out, gray, void of motive or purpose. He wondered if some long voyage . . . to lose himself on the other side of the world . . .

His eyes strayed back again to his companion. She was watching some shining specks of sail on the horizon, her cheek and the curve of her neck turned toward him and the round whiteness of her shoulder outlined through the open-work of her bodice. There was no hint there of the air of decision that sometimes showed about her mouth—that set a tiny line or two around her usually merry eyes. It looked so tender—so feminine—so young. How it would soothe him to hide his face there, in the soft hollow of her neck!

Suddenly, the other side of the world seemed unbearably lonely. He saw himself on some desolate deck, lost in an unanswering and uncomprehending infinity of sea and sky; or in the swirl of a huge, strange city, longing for just the enfolding sympathy and comprehension this girl could give, out of their common suffering—longing and reaching, and she ten thousand miles beyond voice or touch. If he could keep near her, whatever happened! The bitter hardness of the future melted again into a sense of outstretching peace; a thin track of sunshine stole out into that gray void. It seemed to follow close beside any path upon which his thoughts placed her. He was not quite conscious, yet, of setting her forth clearly to himself as a source and cause of happiness, but the idea of her and the idea of happiness were becoming linked the one with the other in his mind.

He watched her as he smoked slowly

—her chin resting on her hand, piquantly alert as her gaze followed the movement of the crowds on the shore below them. Now and then a half-smile lighted up her eyes and set a faint dimple in her cheek. He threw away the end of his cigar as he rose.

"Come," he said, "let's go down to the beach."

"Oh, can we?" she cried. "Do you know, it has been reminding me of that day at the old Maryboro' fair!"

"Wait till you see them at close range," he laughed; "neither crowd would be much flattered by the comparison, I fancy—but you are pretty nearly right, for all that."

They crossed the lawn, following a worn track under fine old elms, at one time the pride of some ancient Patroon, but now reduced to shabby gentility—furtive touts for the restaurant which had seized upon the white-pillared mansion behind them. A trolley road skirted the little salt river to which the sward had formerly dipped. Across this was the long strip of white sands, board-walked, fringed with flaming booths which seemed to jostle one another like the holiday crowds. Midway of the narrow bridge crossing the river they stopped, to watch the seaweed streaming in the incoming tide.

"By George!" said Walton, as if finishing out his thought, "how long ago was that day at Maryboro'—fifteen years?"

"Fifteen years this month," she answered. "It was the Autumn after I came home from school at Pride's. That was the first Summer you were at Elmville. Don't you remember we used to call you and Dr. North 'the two tenderfeet,' and make fun of your soft r's?"

She looked at him with so much of the roguish tease reminiscent in her eyes that his eyes laughed back to hers.

The light chains of association, linked of recollections awakened by her words, were growing curiously strong about him. They seemed to draw out incident after incident, long hidden in his memory, of the age of late youth and early manhood which, he always

felt, marked the first full cycle of his life—to which his boyhood and even his college years were but a vague and misty preface. And in them all stood the clear, bright figure of this girl. It entered earlier even than that of his wife. It formed part of a past before Beth came; and that was the past which this afternoon, with an odd persistence, seemed bent upon paralleling. They swept along with the crowd in the same mood of indulgent good nature with which they had watched the county-fair folk at Maryboro'—exchanging sympathetic glee over the harangues of the barkers, signaling their common delight over extraordinary hats, slipping furtively into the gipsy fortune-teller's, and almost yielding to the seductions of the tin-type artist. They stopped at last in front of the rink, and looked hesitatingly at its soiled white pinnacles spangled with mica dust.

"What do you say to a skate, Eleanor?" Walton asked; "it is real ice."

"Oh—do you suppose we would meet anyone? But I don't care, anyway. I *would* like to try again!"

"Again"—so small a suggestion sent his memory off upon a new trail. He recalled the first Winter he had known her, and the evening when she sprained her ankle in a fall on the pond and he carried her to her sleigh. Clearer than the dingy board walls and "bleachers" there hung before him the picture of the white Northern landscape in the falling dusk, and the gray Northern skies. They made a round, hand in hand, and came out again into the ripe October afternoon, the smell of the salt and the hollow murmur of the sea. Walton looked at his watch, with a slight sigh.

"I suppose we must start," he said; "the boat leaves in fifteen minutes. There won't be another until six-thirty."

"Oh, yes," she assented quickly, "we must take this one. You thread the way through the crowd and I will follow."

They worked toward the landing,

drawing gradually into a definite stream of early home-goers like themselves. There was ample room on deck, however, and Walton found a place for their two chairs where they could watch the shores behind them narrowing to a band of shadowy violet between the orange of the sunset and the coppery glint of the waves. It was a long run home, partly across an open arm of the sea where the swell was driving in strong, and the smooth, steady glide of the steamer gave place first to a gentle heaving and then to a plunging roll that quickly emptied the decks. A steward, gathering up the tumbling chairs, hesitated near Walton and Eleanor and then retired to the shelter of the lighted saloon doorway. A sudden coldness had struck through the air, and a wandering bank of sea fog blotted out the sunset. Presently Walton rose and held out his hand to his companion.

"Don't you want to go inside?" he said. "I am afraid you must be cold. I'll find you a seat in the cabin. Then, if you don't mind, I'll take a turn up and down the deck."

"Oh, may I, too? I'm not a bit cold, really, and I would rather stay out with you. I love this—the gray seas rushing out of the fog, and sliding away into it again."

"Do you?" he cried eagerly. "I did not suppose you would like it. Come on, then—here, hold onto the stanchion till I stow these chairs in the rack. Now—give me your hands. Let's start off while she is fairly steady. Keep your muscles lax, and let the deck swing under you."

"I know," she laughed, "it's a little like riding horseback."

For a few turns she held his arm; then gaily insisting she could manage alone, she tramped beside him, her face eagerly alert above her turned-up collar, every movement showing the quick elasticity of temperament of a girl used with the confidence of a woman. Once she slipped, and as Walton caught her he felt for a moment the supple strength of her body. They talked very little, but he was realizing the exhilaration of

a companionship such as he had scarcely ever known. His ideal for his wife had always been that without sacrificing womanliness she should be a good fellow; but Beth—poor girl—had been too delicate to take much part in any active pleasures, and in spite of his ever-springing hope her vitality had steadily waned. For the last year she had been fading farther and farther into that borderland from which her sight and touch of the things of life were pitifully faint. Eleanor, pacing the unsteady deck close to him, rosy with the sea-wind and unconsciously keying her mood to that wakened in him by the race of the wave and the eddying of the fog, filled a place he had always, though with unacknowledged vain longing, been holding open.

As they crept up the river the swell died away, and the boat slipped out of the fog into clear skies lighted by a soft afterglow. Leaning on the rail, Walton and Eleanor watched the panorama of dusk shores on which a host of lights was sketching the outlines of streets and buildings. Over the west was yet a broad band of light; and out of it, as he gazed, there stole again into Walton's heart that intangible promise of largeness and peace.

Weeks of glorious weather followed; the weather-wise called it a "wonderful Fall"; but there were no more excursions. Beth was too ill. Walton and his sister-in-law were wrapped up in a life which made the care of her its sole purpose and end. He would leave her in the morning, pathetically wistful, and hurry home in the afternoon to find her strange and frightened with fever. After she had dropped into an exhausted sleep he and Eleanor would steal down to the sheltered porch—it was still warm enough to sit out of doors—and talk in low tones as he smoked. Gradually she became the confidante of his plans, his hopes, his troubles—the minor aspects of life which under other conditions he would have shown only to Beth. Eleanor's response was all the gentler that it was a little reserved; while toward his wife Walton's expression, blighted on this

side, blossomed on another in the form of an even greater tenderness of patience. His growing dependence on Eleanor could scarcely be secret, even from himself; but if any hint of a new feeling shone through his expression or manner, she ignored it.

One evening, however, after the conventional, brotherly good-night kiss, he followed her in and caught her again in the hallway, holding her by stretching both arms across the passage and bending to kiss her once more. His lips had almost met hers when something in his eyes, perhaps, startled her, for she suddenly evaded him.

"No, no!" she exclaimed in a half-whisper, darting past him to the foot of the stairs.

He laughed, a little uncomfortably.

"Naughty, naughty!" he scolded, as if to a wilful child; but the pretense was not very well done. Half-way up the stairs Eleanor paused, leaning over the rail.

"Good night, Harry," she said, very gently.

"Good night, dear," he answered; and though he did not know it, his lips breathed into the words that which they had been refused a moment before.

Near the end of October Beth showed one of those strange semblances of recovery which, like false lights, lead the hopes of the watchers to the more bitter wreck. Almost like one waking from torpor she seemed to return again to her old interests in life. Walton, all other ideas submerged in a welling flood of gladness, hung over her like a devoted nurse.

"Beth," he said one morning, "I am going to do my work at home, while the fine weather lasts, anyway, so I can carry you in and out from the garden every day."

"Oh, Harry—can you?" The childish eagerness of joy in her tone and her face brought the tears to his eyes. "And will you begin tomorrow?"

"Yes, little girl—tomorrow. I'll arrange for it today."

She lay back on her pillows, smiling blissfully. As he was leaving, she called him back:

"Bring home some flower seeds and bulbs, will you, Harry? And we will plant them tomorrow, in honor of my outing."

The day turned out all that a lover's heart could conceive. Beth, wrapped in a soft rug and almost floated on cushions, lay on a couch in a sheltered corner of the garden wall. The maples over her head were red gold against the soft turquoise of the sky, and the sunlight about her seemed suffused with their dissolved color. A faint wind, unfelt where she lay, shook off a few leaves, swirling slowly down to lie in vivid spots on the path. Her eyes wandered back from them to her husband.

"There," he said in a tone of satisfaction, getting to his feet with just a little twinge of stiffness; "that's the last of them."

"What were those, Harry?"

"The daffodils. Do you know, they are to me the dearest flower that grows—the very embodiment of the yearning of the Spring."

A startled look leaped to her eyes. She slipped lower among the cushions, and a gray shadow crept into her face.

"The Spring," she whispered, "the Spring! . . . and every one of them will come up . . . will be here in the sunshine with you! Oh, Harry! Oh, my little boy!"

He flung himself on his knees beside her, the terror and grief in her voice striking his heart like some heavy missile.

"Beth!" he choked through sudden tears. "My little girl! No. . . . We'll watch for them together . . . you will be so strong by then . . . Beth! Dear heart!"

Her head, buried in his arms, quivered slowly.

"No," she whispered, "No. . . . My little boy! Always, always mine . . . and I thought I should make you happy. . . . I want you to be happy. . . . But you will remember!"

He held her, blind with a mist through which the blurred glory of the sun and the foliage glanced in miserable mockery. His tears fell on her hand,

and she raised it, stroking his cheek softly. After a while:

"Carry me in," she whispered, frightened; "I feel so weak."

He picked her up in his arms (she was so light!), brushing his wet eyes on her shoulder as he lifted her; and as he dumbly felt the way along the path with his feet he heard her whisper once more:

"Springtime—and daffodils!"

She had grown very quiet, and seemed to have fallen asleep. Eleanor signed to Walton that he had better slip away, and he went downstairs silently. The dusk had fallen; the false lights of hope had gone out, and he saw clearly.

He wandered into his den; every piece of furniture in it spoke voicelessly of some happy day they had spent together, searching from shop to shop. On the desk was her little book of housekeeping accounts; he picked it up and it opened at a page of pencil entries in her half-childish hand—their last Christmas shopping. His smoking-jacket—how vividly he saw again that evening of merry secret when she gave it to him! Everything embodied her all-encompassing care for him. In stifling pain, he looked down a long vista of years in which the ghosts of her tenderness would throng his days and nights, and rise anew, like haunting perfumes, from old hiding-places; and he would not be able to cry to her—to tell her, over and over, how he saw—how he remembered—how his heart strained in a very agony of answering love. . . .

With a sense of struggling for breath he stepped to the door and stood looking into the darkness. When the Spring should come again, and the daffodils dance in the thin sunshine . . .

He stole upstairs into the room he used when Eleanor took his place in the sick-room, and in the darkness flung himself across the bed, stifling an uncontrollable fit of grief as he buried his face in the pillows.

"Oh, my little one!" he sobbed, "my little Beth—my own little girl! No one but you—never anyone but you!"

"WHERE THERE AREN'T NO TEN COMMANDMENTS"

By John Harwood Bacon

EVERYTHING in Hongkong was different from what Tommy Tubbs fondly had anticipated when accepting an offer from the Battington Typewriter Company to make him assistant manager of a branch office to be opened in the East. Neither to him nor to Mrs. Tubbs did preconceived delights seem conspicuously in evidence, while in some respects first impressions were disquieting as well as disappointing.

That the Tubbses were nicely off as they were when Opportunity unexpectedly whistled up the speaking-tube of their One Hundred and Thirty-seventh street flat was a point that received insufficient attention—a grave mistake. For, despite the svelte proportions of Harlem apartments and of Tommy's weekly salary, they had passed six months of honeymooning under circumstances altogether too satisfactory to warrant a change without solemn deliberation.

But Tommy was twenty-five and active; Mrs. Tommy, twenty-two and passive. Within a fortnight their furniture had been returned to the installment house from which it originally had issued, tear-mingled farewells had been exchanged with miscellaneous relatives in Brooklyn and Jersey City, and the Tubbses had set forth for the hazy East, with hopes as rosy as Mrs. Tommy's cheeks and as high as Tommy's firm little chin.

On shipboard disillusionment began. From steamship folders and other trustworthy sources one learns that a voyage on the Pacific is altogether

delightful. Desirable it is, however, that the weather be docile and one's system indifferent to protracted churning. At the end of a month, during which the good ship *Coptic* performed every nautical equivalent of ground-and-lofty tumbling, the two Tubbs faces resembled Bartlett pears as to hue and contour; while, to add to distrust, the protracted humidity had induced a scarlet rash, as uncomfortable to experience as it was startling to contemplate.

Hongkong was reached in a pouring rain. Ashore in a crowded launch, the Tubbses pushed their way through a throng of howling rickshaw coolies and secured a room at the hotel a few rods distant. And there, an hour later, in an unfragrant vapor, with prickly-heat a-prickling and with ten thousand miles intervening between themselves and One Hundred and Thirty-seventh street, they presented as doleful a picture as ever artist labeled Misery.

"Cheer up," urged Tommy stoutly. "The trunks'll have to come some time. And it can't be like this always."

"If it is," asserted Mrs. Tubbs tremulously, "I shall hate the old place."

Tommy looked meditatively out at the leaden downpour.

"I wonder what's playing at the Casino tonight," he ventured.

Whereupon Mrs. Tommy wept, and the next hour was neither blithe nor gay.

All that day it rained, and the next, and the next. But on the fourth morning the sun burned through the clouds, dispelling the newly-formed lakes in

the streets and reducing mud at crossings from a ten-inch depth to a paltry three. Then it was the Tubbses ventured forth, riding in sedan-chairs through byways and market-places, and treating their eyes and ears and noses to a thousand alien sensations. And then, with the unerring instinct of the first-time tourist, they sought the American consulate.

For an hour that morning the vice-consul general of the United States of America—to his intimates Billy Smith—had perspired over official correspondence—a task devolving upon him since his chieftain's prudent departure for Japan to escape the rainy season. A tall, well-set-up chap was Smith, with a lazy manner and a good-natured smile. To an agitated matron in Tacoma he wrote that he had seen nothing of her missing husband, though he would keep a consular eye open for a dark-haired gentleman—and a light-haired lady. To an enterprising resident of Kalamazoo he expressed polite doubt as to the existence of a demand in South China for patent coat-hangers, while a New England mill-owner he sagely advised to cut piece-goods for China according to Chinese, rather than Connecticut, preferences. In conclusion, he mailed to each of seven seekers after ginseng knowledge a neat little pamphlet discussing that interesting herb—a document quite as accurate as when prepared hastily by a labor-saving official some fifteen years before.

Smiling the smile of the Good and Faithful, and mildly cursing the weather, Smith looked up to find old Choy, the consulate shroff, before him with a tray betokening callers.

"Two piecee," explained the Chinaman—there being no cards on the tray. A moment later a small man and woman stood, parboiled and irresolute, on the threshold.

"Globe-trotting brother and sister," was Smith's prompt conclusion, but he was quickly set aright.

"Mr. Consul," said the little man, "my name is Tubbs—Thomas Tubbs. And this, sir, is my wife."

The vice-consul bade them be seated.

"You've just arrived?" he hazarded pleasantly.

"Oh, no; no, indeed"—promptly. "We've been here nearly four days."

"Ah"—with a suspicion of a smile. "A pleasant voyage?"

"It was horrid!" Mrs. Tubbs, forgetting timidity, vouchsafed the information with emphasis born of conviction.

"My wife," explained Mr. Tubbs with dignity, "was ill most of the time. And so"—frankly—"was I."

"That does make a difference," conceded the vice-consul sympathetically. He was about to launch a happier theme when Mr. Tubbs anticipated him.

"Mr. Consul," said he nervously, "I don't know why we're using up your valuable time. But, somehow, we wanted to talk to an American. As a matter of fact"—with candor altogether likable—"I'm afraid we're both a bit homesick."

Smith's heart warmed.

"Why, it's your *duty* to call here," he assured them. "Calls are about the only recompense we have for living in this steaming, out-of-the-way hole."

"But—but we're going to live here, too," faltered Mrs. Tubbs.

The vice-consul gave a start. "Live here?" he murmured.

"For three whole years," half-sobbed Mrs. Tubbs, while Tommy nodded soberly.

"Fine! Capital!" exclaimed Smith with sudden enthusiasm.

"You'll like it here—you're bound to! It's a trifle moist now, to be sure, but just wait until Fall!"

His words were lost on Mrs. Tubbs, but Tommy smiled gratefully.

"It's mighty good to hear you talk that way," he averred.

"And our American contingent will be delighted," went on Smith. "Now tell me about yourselves—the arrival of new residents is no every-day occurrence, you must understand."

Thus encouraged, Tommy told of the old position relinquished and the new one accepted, of the office to be opened on the Battington agent's arrival, and of "my company's plans to extend its

influence in the Orient." Then, after touching thus lightly upon the uneventful past and the unknown future, he came to the unsettled present.

"Isn't fifteen hundred dollars a pretty fair salary out here?" he demanded. "Not large, but enough for two, I mean. It's nearly four thousand dollars in Hongkong money, isn't it?"

Smith nodded dubiously. "But doubling one's income by applying the exchange rate isn't all that it sounds," he cautioned.

"That's just it"—perplexedly. "Everything seems to cost so much. The hotel rates are simply awful. That's why we want to find a house."

Again the vice-consul gave a start.

"If I were you," he suggested, "I'd go to Tang Yuen—a comfortable sort of a boarding-house on Robinson Road. Then you can consider housekeeping at your leisure."

"A good idea," assented Tommy, and Smith proceeded with directions.

At this juncture a stout man in pongee thrust his head through the doorway and announced apologetically that he wished to see the vice-consul on a matter of greatest urgency.

"Come in, doctor!" begged Smith. "I want you to meet two new residents, Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs—Dr. Furbush, of the Marine Hospital Service. Dr. Furbush," he explained, "is kept here by the Government to see that Manila gets no fresh vegetables."

The doctor's greeting was cordial but businesslike, and the callers rose to go.

"Come and see me often," was Smith's parting injunction. "And I'll look you up. Good-bye." The door closed, and he turned questioningly to the doctor.

"Well, Mr. Marine Hospital Surgeon?"

"Mr. Vice-Consul," was the studied answer, "I've an important proposition. I will play you crackaloo for the drinks."

"Done!" cried Smith with enthusiasm.

Whereupon two representatives of

the United States Government at Hongkong solemnly drew forth pennies and tossed them into the air.

A satisfied smile wreathed the doctor's face as his coin fell squarely astride a crack, while his companion's landed with strict impartiality between two others.

"Confound it!" protested Smith. "Have I ever won?"

"My memory never extends further than the last Scotch-and-soda," was the unsympathetic answer. "And that I purchased myself—finding no adversary worthy of my steel—or rather, my copper. Come on."

They donned their white helmets and went to the outer office.

"Choy," directed Smith. "Want-see chairs. Going club-side. Suppose any man come this-side, you talkee my belong busy. Sa-be?"

"My sa-be," assured Choy, his three lone teeth exhibited in an appreciative grin. He thrust his shaven head into the coolie quarters, and shouted in a high falsetto, and half-a-dozen sleepy Celestials emerged struggling into their cotton uniforms en route. The refreshment seekers were borne side by side to the Hongkong Club, whose broad veranda with its punkah-made breeze was rendered doubly pleasant by rattan chairs and convenient little tables.

"Aha!" exclaimed the doctor, indicating a group near-by. One of its members looked up as the two approached, but gave no sign of recognition; instead, he entered into voluble conversation.

"It seems odd," they heard him say, more loudly than seemed altogether necessary, "that I no sooner forget my better nature long enough to offer to buy a drink than all my acquaintances appear with thirst written all over their countenances. Ordinarily I don't mind, but when Government servants—dull-minded persons whom you and I are taxed to support in luxury——"

"Have you taxable property, Dickie?" broke in Furbush interestedly. "If you have, I've a little 'I. O. U.' that——"

"I consider that wretched bad form," was the dignified reply. "If you hold any of my paper, you should feel proud and honored. What are you two going to have?"

Room was made for the new-comers, and Dickie Barlow—the aggrieved—summoned a boy.

"Wait," suggested the doctor. "Poor old Billy Smith has again met his Crack-a-loo. To be sure"—airily—"there was no specific mention of treating half the colony, but surely a vice-consul general of the United States——"

"Give your order," yielded Smith wearily.

Preferences made known to a white-frocked Chinaman, profitable conversation ensued pending the coming of six ice-choked glasses.

Clean-cut men they were, these adopted sons of the Orient, ease-loving natures oddly at variance with unmistakable mental alertness. Walters, the eldest, was Standard Oil *taipan*—a personage of standing in the land—and Dickie Barlow was one of his subordinates.

As for Trevor and Burton, the former was representative of an Oregon flour concern, the latter of a New York insurance company. Good fellows, all, and fairly typical of the East where good-fellowship abounds.

The arrival of two new residents—a bright-faced boy and a bright-eyed girl, as Smith expressed it—was promptly reported.

"Suppose we consider the latter first," suggested Barlow excitedly. "Who is she?"

"The former's wife," was the smiling answer.

"O-oh! Proceed, sir."

The morning call was duly detailed, from Tommy's derby hat to Mrs. Tommy's homesick tremor.

"I shall do the lady the honor of calling," announced Dickie with enthusiasm.

"So must we all," suggested his superior. "And now, son, back to the Octopus."

A week later Dr. Furbush entered

the vice-consul's office and found that official deep in correspondence.

"Mr. Vice-Consul," he began mysteriously, "I've an important proposition——"

"No crackaloo today," was the unbending dictum. "I've fifty-seven varieties of letters to write, and two battered-up sailor gentlemen outside are waiting to tell me how it happened."

"You wrong me, Billy," laughed the doctor. "No, this is serious. Burton and I are giving a dinner Friday for the Allisons, who are coming down from Canton. May we count on you?"

"You certainly may"—with promptitude.

"Good. And what would you say to our inviting the small Tubbs persons?"

"Bully!"

"I've met the little chap once or twice, and he looks as forlorn as a sampan chow-dog. This might cheer him. His *taipan* has arrived—have you met him?"

Smith nodded dubiously. "Little Tubbs brought him around yesterday—an uncouth sort of an hombre. Took pains to explain that his purpose in coming East was to sell typewriters, not to meet people socially."

"May he prosper!" murmured the doctor. "Well, we'll ask the Tubbses, then. I'll send a note to Tang Yuen at once."

Early that afternoon the vice-consul had a caller in the person of Mr. Thomas Tubbs.

"Mr. Smith," said he gravely, "I've come on a personal matter. Dr. Furbush has asked us to a dinner Friday, and we'd like to go."

"Good," approved Smith.

"But the trouble is"—with a trace of embarrassment—"I suppose I ought to wear a dinner-jacket."

"Ye-es—or perhaps a tail-coat might be better."

"I didn't know"—frankly. "But the point is I haven't either. Do you suppose I could borrow a suit?"

Smith was tactful.

"Why not have an outfit made?" he

suggested. "You'll need the things pretty frequently out here."

"But how can I—in two days? Besides——"

"My old friend Tak Cheong could turn out a suit in half that time," assured Smith, with a smile. "And then"—thoughtfully—"if you don't feel like paying right away, give him your chit. But don't get the 'I. O. U.' habit!" he warned. "It's a constant temptation to sign a chit and think, 'Thank heaven, that's paid!'"

"I shouldn't like to get in that frame of mind," agreed Tommy soberly. "But I will order those clothes, and I'm much obliged to you."

By some mysterious process known only to the resourceful Tak Cheong the new clothes were finished by Friday, and worn by Tommy at the Burton-Furbush dinner. Mrs. Tommy, dainty as a bit of old Sèvres in fluffy blue, found herself sharing with Mrs. Walters and Mrs. Allison the attention of eight gallants—a guest ratio deemed highly creditable in a land whose womankind was outnumbered ten to one. The dinner, served in the hotel's private dining-room, bore evidence of the skill of the Chinese chef and the ways of the dinner-giving East.

To the Tubbses the affair was a revelation. More than once did Mrs. Tubbs—particularly when confronted by a bewildering array of glasses—glance timidly at her spouse across the flower-sprinkled table, but the encouraging smile received in return contained no reflection of her qualms. It was a flushed little man that followed the others, at the conclusion of dinner, to the hosts' top-floor apartment, where a breeze-swept veranda and an impressive punch-bowl provided relief from the night's relentless heat.

Toward the middle of the evening Smith—dreamily contemplating the myriad lights of the harbor—was suddenly awakened from his reverie by Burton, who whispered excitedly:

"For the love of heaven, old man, keep Mrs. Tubbs occupied for a moment!"

Burton vanished as quickly as he had

appeared, leaving the vice-consul to follow instructions blindly. Mrs. Tubbs was located near a window, conversing with Walters, and her manner was strangely nervous and distraught. Mystified, Smith sauntered over.

"Just look at those sampan lights down there," he remarked, at a venture. "The harbor resembles a dislocated sky, doesn't it?"

But instead of rhapsodizing Mrs. Tubbs looked up and demanded abruptly:

"Do you know where my husband is?"

"Why, no," answered Smith, in surprise. "Probably on the side-veranda. Shall I see?"

He glanced casually into the room, then hastily out again, pointing to Kowloon across the bay and referring to its splendid driveway that skirted the shore. But something in his look betrayed him. Mrs. Tubbs rose deliberately and peered in through the window—just as a pale, disheveled little man was hastily piloted out through a side-door leading to the hall.

Valiantly, but vainly, did Smith and Walters discourse upon the beauties of the night. Mrs. Tubbs burst into tears—first of alarm, then of chagrin and mortification—while her companions stood by in helpless sympathy. Discreetly they and the other men withdrew, leaving to Mrs. Walters and Mrs. Allison the delicate task of reassurance; and ten minutes later Mr. and Mrs. Tubbs—the former very white, the latter very red—paid their embarrassed adieux.

"Whew!" gasped Furbush, returning from the street, where he had seen his two guests safely deposited in rickshaws. "Somebody kindly give me a drink!"

He was accommodated.

"How did it all happen in the first place?" he demanded.

"Buddha only knows," said Walters piously.

"At dinner little Tubbs didn't seem unduly thirsty," remarked Dickie Barlow.

"Still, he was doing very well, thank

you," observed Mrs. Allison. "And then, there is a punch present, I believe."

"My own handiwork," beamed Furbush.

"I was passing through the room," testified Burton, "when I spied Tubbsie in a corner, alone and most unhappy."

"Little cub!" muttered Smith, mindful of his own unsuccessful rôle in the drama.

"Oh, come now," protested the doctor, mollified by a glass of his own punch. "What do you expect of a griffin? It will do him good—give him balance."

"Was that the effect it was having?" was the ungracious query.

"I'd like to hear the kind words they're exchanging about this moment," suggested Dickie.

"Poor little girl!" smiled Mrs. Walters sympathetically.

"Poor little man, you mean," corrected her husband knowingly.

For several days Tommy avoided his newly-made friends, though rumor had it that he called upon Dr. Furbush with profuse and wholly unnecessary apologies. About a week later, however, while a time-honored function known as a "little game" was in progress in the Burton-Furbush chambers, who should appear but little Tommy Tubbs.

"Come in, old man, come in!" greeted Furbush, at that moment examining five cards with super-scrupulous care. "Glad to see you."

The others' welcome was equally cordial.

"I didn't know you were having a blow-out this afternoon," apologized Tommy.

Blow-out be hanged!" growled Walters, who was reading a magazine apart from the others. "A session of cut-throats and robbers. Come over here away from them."

Tommy accepted a chair and a Scotch-and-soda, but his eyes kept wandering toward the table.

"I used to play penny ante," he remarked.

For some time he played interested spectator, but at last desire got the better of prudence.

"If you fellows don't mind," he ventured, "I'd like to take a hand myself."

"Certainly," was the response, polite but not unnecessarily urgent.

"If you are dining home tonight," remarked Dr. Furbush cautiously, "you'll not have very much time."

"Oh, I can play half an hour or so," answered Tommy innocently.

They made room for him, while the banker supplied a tricolored cylinder of chips.

It soon became apparent that Tommy's knowledge of poker was at best academic. Steadily, unfailingly, inevitably did he lose, while the clock's hands moved with disheartening persistency. At last, thirty Mexican dollars poorer than when he had arrived, he rose and somewhat sheepishly announced he must be going—though first, like a little man, he settled his account, despite assurances that his chit would be equally acceptable. His departure was followed by grim silence.

"Look here," burst out the doctor, at length. "I don't want that youngster's money. And I don't believe you chaps do, either."

"But what could we have done?" demanded Trevor.

"The kid was ordained to be sold," quoted Smith.

"That's all very well"—with some heat. "But this particular kid has a small wife—and a smaller salary. Next time, for heaven's sake, let's discourage him!"

But "next time" Tommy pre-empted a seat without so much as a by-your-leave; and his second experience was precisely like his first. Again there was a conference.

"He plays worse than I do!" declared Dickie disgustedly. "High heaven knows I'm deep enough in, but I object to filching pennies from infants."

"I'll have a talk with him," announced Furbush grimly.

True to his word, the doctor called

at the Battington office, but his well-meant efforts went for naught.

"I'm not a piker, doctor," protested Tommy. "Because I've lost twice is no reason to quit. I'll win yet—you see!"

"But my point is this," explained Furbush patiently. "You'll not only lose more money than you can afford—and, mark my words, you will—but a whole lot of time that belongs to a small Somebody up at Tang Yuen. We unmarried chaps can make fools of ourselves in as many different ways as we see fit, but you family men"—with studied emphasis—"haven't that privilege."

But Tommy was obdurate. With regularity did he join the "cutthroats and robbers," and just as often was he a loser. In but one particular did subsequent experiences differ from the first—he no longer declined to proffer his "I. O. U." By early Fall Tommy Tubbs's "paper" reposed in half-a-dozen pocketbooks, much to the inconvenience of its holders—particularly the ones upon whom Fortune had been frowning—but by tacit understanding the colonial custom of presenting the chits monthly for collection was in his case suspended.

While Tommy was becoming acquainted with one phase of Hongkong life Mrs. Tubbs was being initiated into sundry others. Masculine attention in abundance was hers—at first bewildering, then not unpleasant, then wholly indispensable. Like Tommy's devotion to the Little Game, it was in no wise conducive to simple domesticity.

"Whenever I call," fumed Barlow, "I find her surrounded by half-a-dozen bally Englishmen. They're good enough chaps, but—hang it! they don't understand American women."

Right rapidly did the Tubbses become Hongkongized. In a social life never contemplated by the scheme of things in Harlem were they soon active factors. There were dinners by the dozen and launch-parties by the score, with dances and more formal functions as soon as cool weather replaced the

Summer heat. Also there were heavy expenses. But while an odd little furrow was forming between Tommy's troubled eyes Mrs. Tubbs waxed fairer day by day, while her expression of shrinking timidity grew less in evidence.

"They're such helpless infants, one can't help liking them," declared Furbush to Smith, in the course of one of several conversations on the subject. "But she's as selfish as he is headstrong. The East isn't helping them."

Misgivings, however, but served as a spur to the doctor in his self-constituted rôle of mentor and guide. Unbeknown to any, he more than once smoothed over little difficulties in the Tubbs ménage—differences due to Tommy's erratic hours or Mrs. Tommy's promptly-acquired habit of shopping with "chits" when currency was not available. In public he kept a watchful eye upon them, particularly with reference to Tommy's limited qualifications for the part of *bon vivant*, while on one or two occasions he tactfully rescued Mrs. Tommy from an indiscretion that might have brought her within range of local gossip-lovers. In further proof of friendship he loaned them money.

Furbush was especially interested, therefore, to learn that the Tubbses contemplated taking a bungalow—tidings given Mrs. Walters by Mrs. Tubbs, and quickly spread.

"But how in the world will they manage it?" was demanded curiously by several—and answered adequately by none.

A pretty Peak bungalow was duly leased and occupied, and for several weeks an era of seeming prosperity ensued. And then came the inevitable.

Dr. Furbush was alone at his desk when little Tubbs, pale as a specter, appeared, paused for a moment tremulously, blurted, "Doctor, I'm a damned thief!" and sank into a chair, unnerved and sobbing.

With difficulty Furbush drew out a rational story. For weeks the boy had been overdrawing his salary in a

fruitless effort to appease his creditors among the tradespeople, and now, after becoming hopelessly entangled, he had come to a realization of the seriousness of his position. But conscience as well as alarm was a factor in his determination to make a clean breast of his fault: he was now on his way to the office to confess, prepared to accept the consequences.

"You've been so bully good to me," he explained brokenly, "that I wanted you to know first. I haven't even told my wife yet—I couldn't—though of course she must know soon." His lip trembled. "I'm ready for my medicine. Whatever I have coming to me I deserve. I don't care for myself. But—but my wife——"

Furbush forestalled a second breakdown by rising abruptly and seizing his hat.

"Come on," said he. "I'm going with you."

Though the doctor's presence at the painful interview in the Battington office lent moral courage, it was apparently of little weight in stemming the tide of the *taipan's* wrath. Wade was a burly man, little given to sentiment, and his anger upon learning of his assistant's wrongdoing was promptly followed by threats of vengeance.

"He's had his fling," was the uncompromising dictum, "and now he must take the consequences. This will all fall on me," he added savagely to the miserable Tommy, "and if I've got to suffer you can bet you'll do some suffering, too, but in another way. A taste of jail may do you good."

"Look here," put in Dr. Furbush with energy, "there's no need of rubbing it in. Let's talk the situation over sensibly, and see if we can't arrive at an understanding—a settlement for example."

"There'll be no compromise," growled Wade.

Nevertheless, when Furbush took his departure he had exacted a promise that no steps toward securing a warrant would be taken until after Tommy's friends had been given a chance to see what they could do. Even this con-

cession offered slight consolation, for the doctor knew full well how little fortified they were for meeting such a contingency.

At the club he found Smith and Barlow. A moment's silence followed the revelation made to them in a secluded corner, and then came a rejoinder that meant that in times of stress each man of the East felt himself his brother's keeper.

"What shall we do?"

"Meet in my room after tiffin. I'll have the crowd together," explained the doctor briskly, "and by that time we may have a plan."

At two o'clock seven men were gathered, discussing the news in serious undertones.

"Let's open these ceremonies," suggested Dickie Barlow, "with a little burnt offering."

Solemnly he emptied into the grate the contents of a fat wallet—a collection of little slips of paper bearing the initials "T. T." He touched a match to the heap, while the others added similar contributions of varying sizes.

"And now to business," smiled Dr. Furbush grimly, when only a smoldering ember remained. "I've just left Wade, and here's the situation: it's pay-up or jail for Tommy Tubbs. And he can't pay up. The amount is about \$700 Mex. And that's not the worst of it," he went on, scanning the serious faces about him. "Even if Tommy gets out of his trouble, he can't leave the colony until his creditors are settled with. Now, what shall we do?"

"What do *you* propose?" asked someone.

"Settle, and assume his obligations—the whole kiboodle," was the prompt reply.

"But look here," protested Dickie Barlow, with a troubled air. "It sounds simple, but how? If there's any one of us with a surplus he's been mighty mum about it. So far as I'm concerned, my assets, entire, wouldn't purchase a lot in Happy Valley Cemetery." Sundry nods testified that he was not alone in his lack of resources.

"But don't gather that I don't *want*

to help—and I know we all do. If you've any plan, doctor, for Himmel's sake, let's have it."

Deep in the heart of each one present was something more than a feeling of sympathy; there was a vague sense of unintentional responsibility for the conditions that had brought little Tubbs to grief, and a desire amounting almost to obligation to make reparation.

"Here is my proposition, then," explained Furbush. "I have been to old Wong Hing, the compradore, and I tell you, boys, he's a white old Chinaman. He offered at once to advance all we need on our joint note—at nominal interest and on long time. It means a heavy obligation for us fellows, but I think it will prove a good investment. And if little Tubbs once gets on his feet, I'll wager he'll work his hands to the bones to pay us back. It's a pretty contrite little man, and the lesson won't be lost. Now what do you say?"

Without a dissenting voice the doctor's plan was endorsed, and a committee formed to take charge.

"And now what to do with the Tubbses themselves?" said the doctor, when the financial question was settled. "Of course they will have to leave the colony. Has anyone a suggestion?"

No one apparently had, and a second deadlock followed.

"I have it," exclaimed Smith suddenly. "There's a brother of mine in California with a fruit farm and slathers of money—though I've never seen either. He'd give them a berth, I feel sure—at least he's offered me one often enough. Wonder why I didn't think of it before. Suppose we cable?"

Again was unanimous endorsement given, and a motion carried that the cost of a cablegram be included in the schedule of Tommy Tubbs's liabilities. That very evening a favorable answer was received, and the following morning two steamship tickets, secured at a

greatly reduced price, through Walters's influence, were added to the syndicate's obligations.

On a clear morning in January the San Francisco-bound mailship steamed from its Hongkong moorings, bearing a serious-faced little couple to the land where new hope and a fresh start were waiting. Standing at the rail, Tommy and Mrs. Tommy waved their handkerchiefs toward a launch scudding away for the shore, while those on board shouted their adieux. Soon the steamer had rounded a bend, and the members of the launch-party had disembarked and were sauntering toward the club. On the veranda Dr. Furbush waxed discursive.

"The Purple Orient," mused he, "is peculiar. Upon some natures it acts as a gentle sedative, toning the mental system, eliminating abnormal desire for hurry and worry, and inducing a feeling of peaceful content that makes life an admirable institution. But upon others it 'sics' the demnition bow-wows. The rights of the few demand that the Purple Orient be abolished."

"Dr. Furbush," responded Dickie Barlow with candor, "I beg to remark that you make me tired."

"Well, my son"—tolerantly—"have you a better suggestion to offer?"

"I have"—promptly. "I suggest a drink."

"Dickie," beamed the doctor, "that's the most sensible remark you've made today."

A trayful of beverages was delivered from within as promptly as was consistent with good workmanship.

"And now," quoth Smith, glancing at a faint line of smoke still visible on the horizon, "let us overlook her occasional practical jokes, and drink to the good Far East."

"With a supplementary wish," amended Dickie, "for the long life and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tubbs."



TO SWINBURNE, FROM AMERICA

By Allan Updegraff

MASTER of singing words,
Of sunbursts and meteors of sound;
Bard of the rhymes of winds
And of waves blown rhythmic along;
Let words grow gray that leaped
As blood from the lips of a wound—
Sing us an even-song.

Splendid they were and glad,
And kissed of the god's live coal,
Singers of times foredone
To the ultimate past who throng;
Yet still were the splendor and joy
Of the singing all unwhole,
Wanting thine even-song.

Poet, not time nor fools
Shall tarnish the flash of thy gold;
King, to the ages of ages
The glows of thy youth belong;
We still would pray the marge
Of the scroll not empty unrolled—
Sing us an even-song.

Stilled to the hearts we heard
When thy two great peers gave voice;
"Ave!" they cried from the sand,
And their high salutes rose strong;
Waits pilot at all for thee?
Or struggle of human choice?—
Sing us an even-song.

Ivy that grows from the graves
Of roses and dead afternoons;
Laurel's dim purples and greens
Where lilies late worshiped in throng;
Rath wheat, undulant gold
From the gray and bare black of the dunes—
These for thy crown of song.

Day unto day showeth truth,
And night unto night uttereth
Speech to the open heart,
So it taketh of time no wrong;
Age-dowered high-priest of fate,
Of beauty, of life, and of death,
Sing us an even-song.

THE INEXPLICABLE FEE

By James Hazelton Willard

INEXPLICABLE prosperity caused me inexpressible misery. Two months since, a stranger in a great city, in straitened circumstances and without employment, I was nevertheless ambitious, hopeful and happy; today, sitting in a well-furnished office, surrounded by the luxuries which wealth brings, loved by a most adorable woman, and with an assured legal career, I am a wretched, heart-broken, almost despairing man.

No one can guess it, so I may as well make my statement.

After graduating from college and law-school, I opened an office in a small town in Ohio with the hope of soon acquiring a fair practice, but month after month passed monotonously without this expectation being realized. It was evident that some action must be taken before my resources were exhausted. It seemed most feasible to sell my furniture, pack my few books and go to New York, in the endeavor to enter a law-office as a clerk.

Mr. Dayton, a respectable attorney of that city, was a friend of my family, and I bore a letter of introduction to him. I secured a room at a low-priced boarding-house on the day of my arrival, and during the same afternoon called on Mr. Dayton. He received me kindly. There was no vacancy in his office. He had only one clerk, who had been many years in his service, but the old lawyer thought he might possibly obtain suitable employment for me elsewhere.

The result of my experiment was quite disheartening, but being an optimist, I was not unhappy, although

the events of the day might well have daunted a more experienced man. The next afternoon found me again at Mr. Dayton's office. He had left for the day and there was no message for me. To save carfare I determined to walk up Broadway. It was nearly dusk, and sauntering idly, I pondered deeply and somewhat acrimoniously over my want of success. The fit of abstraction was interrupted by my noticing a somewhat shabbily-dressed man, who regarded me closely. His small, deep-set, ferret-like eyes impressed me unfavorably. Imagining that he was a detective, I felt somewhat uneasy under his piercing glance, although I passed him without any sign of observation. He paused a moment, and then swift steps pattered on the walk behind me.

"No, there is no mistake," he cried, turning toward me as he came up. "Glad to meet you, old chum."

"I am no chum, also not old," I replied pointedly.

"How dare you so shamelessly deny your identity? What new deviltry are you up to now?" he asked wrathfully, his small eyes lighting up with resentment and surprise.

"None. I have committed no crime. You cannot arrest me, and must cease to annoy me," cried I excitedly, and passed by him hurriedly.

A few minutes later a young man, dressed in the most pronounced English style, large-checked in raiment, swaggering in gait, loud of voice and red of face, came down the street.

"How are you, Fuzzy Wuzzy?" he almost shouted, as he reached me, letting fall a heavy hand on my shoulder.

"That's not my name, Mr. Bunco-steerer," I responded, looking him calmly but sternly full in the eyes, and withdrawing my shoulder from his superimposed hand.

"Hah! Is that the new gag in this town? Gracious! but this is rich. Bunco-steerer! You will pay a dozen fizz for this, my boy."

"Sir," I retorted, with some exasperation, "I shall have no financial transactions with you, nor shall I pay a dozen fizz, whatever a dozen fizz may mean in your thieves' lingo."

At my words his swaggering air vanished; he blushed under the influence of some unusual emotion—probably disconcertion at my almost immediate discovery of his vocation—and a look of bewilderment and confusion came into his eyes. There was no manifestation of anger in his manner; amazement seemed to render him dumb as I resumed my walk up the street.

As I was nearing Twenty-third street a clean-shaven, well-dressed stranger approached me with a look of recognition. "Here's the head centre of this conspiracy," I murmured inaudibly. He wore on the lapel of his coat the badge of a leading college fraternity, which gave assurance that he was a gentleman, and his voice had the ring of true friendliness in its tone as he addressed me.

"Good evening, Hector," he said. "I trust you are enjoying your usual health and customary serenity of mind. No green devils with pink ears after the champagne last night, eh? You are going the pace fast and furious, old man."

"Pardon me," I interrupted. "It is not my fortune to have the pleasure of your acquaintance. You are in error."

"Hardly," he responded. "You cannot play Dromio of Syracuse in the streets of New York. Have you lost your senses, Hector, since we parted last night?"

"No, sir," I answered, "but you are fast losing the manners which should characterize a gentleman."

"If you are not prevaricating, you

can easily prove it," he cried in angry tones. "Please give me your card."

A sudden impulse to convince him of his error caused me to accede to his request. Opening my card-case, I handed him a card which bore simply my name and address. He gazed at the card incredulously, said nothing, but beckoned a passing cabman. When the hansom stopped he entered it, while I stood, somewhat bewildered, on the sidewalk. These rencounters were annoying and even gave rise to a lurking fear in my mind that I was the object of a criminal conspiracy.

A servant awakened me quite early the next morning, knocking on the door of my room and saying that a gentleman awaited me in the parlor. I dressed hurriedly and, on descending, found that my visitor was a plainly dressed, middle-aged man. His appearance impressed me unfavorably. While his countenance was intellectual, and even refined, his eyes were shifty, never meeting mine, and seemed to indicate constant fear. He addressed me by name and asked if I could meet a gentleman at his rooms in Thirty-fourth street at eleven o'clock. He intimated that the gentleman might wish to employ me in some legal capacity. I responded to his question affirmatively, and not until I returned to my room did I connect this visit with the occurrences of the previous evening, deeming it the result of my card having been given to the stranger. I determined, however, to keep the engagement—the chance of employment should not be lost.

The house in Thirty-fourth street was of good appearance. The man who had visited my lodgings met me at the door and went with me into a back parlor. At one side of the room was an alcove, in which stood a massive carved bedstead surmounted by a rich canopy with heavy curtains almost hiding the occupant, a very feeble, aged man, with long gray hair and beard, whose face was almost deathlike in its pallor. The old man opened the conversation

with an air of rather insolent superiority.

"You are a lawyer, I understand?" he began.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you an office?"

"No, not yet," I replied, rather shamefacedly.

"You can take a case for me that will pay you well, if I wish to employ you?"

"Certainly, if the employment be honest and honorable."

"You shall be asked to do nothing dishonorable. Would a thousand dollars a week be liberal compensation?"

I shall always believe that I have the true legal instinct, for although the largest fee ever previously received by me was only twenty-five dollars, my response was doubtful and drawling.

"Well, yes," I answered hesitatingly; "still, the charge might be a little higher than that—say fifteen hundred dollars."

He gave me a keen, intensely searching glance, and hesitated a few moments before replying.

"I must have perfect and uncomplaining service," he resumed. "This could be secured from others, and in a regular manner, but I prefer to manage my legal affairs in my own way. If we can agree as to the services, we will not quarrel about money matters. The employment will continue not less than three weeks; your fee will be three hundred dollars a day, and you shall have, if you succeed, an additional contingent fee of twenty thousand dollars, but I must be the sole judge of your success. Are the terms satisfactory?"

"Yes, sir, most liberal, if the employment be not dishonorable nor too arduous," I replied.

"Dishonorable? Let us settle this once for all. Do you consider it dishonorable to refuse to recognize in any manner people whom you do not know?"

"Certainly not, sir," I answered, smiling.

"Then you will have nothing dishonorable to do," he continued, "but the performance of your duties must be

exact. An immense sum of money is involved in the accomplishment of my desires in the way I direct."

"What is your name?" I asked, taking the initiative.

"As Mr. Nemo, you may enter my name on your books as your first real client," he answered sneeringly.

"Your secretary's name?"

"Call him Mr. Nimmer."

"You are certainly far from frank with your negative pseudonyms. What villainy does this masquerading conceal?"

"None," he rejoined. "Temper your language, sir. I assure you I am seeking the accomplishment of a legal object. Your scruples are puerile and quixotic," and his manner was arrogant and scornful.

"Perhaps the services are very arduous," I ventured.

"On the contrary, they are trivial," he replied. "My secretary will take down my instructions in writing, that there may be no mistake. Your chief service will be to ride in Central Park. You will drive from this house with Mr. Nimmer to various shops, where a complete outfit will be ordered for you at my expense. You will send an order to your boarding-house for your trunk, and will return there no more. You will go to some quiet village for a week, while your clothing is being made. At the proper time Mr. Nimmer will come for you and bring you back to the city. During the next two weeks, while residing in a house with him, you will see no visitor and receive no communication. You will ride each day in Central Park; and mark this—you will accord no recognition, by look or word, to anyone whom you do not personally know, neither admitting nor denying your identity if questioned. If you shall have occasion to ride with a lady, you will treat her courteously, but will not seek to discover more than her first name. You will not leave the house except for these rides in the Park. On quitting my employ you will consent to be instantly conducted to a room, where you will remain twenty-four hours, and will shave your mustache

and have your hair cut short before you emerge therefrom, and not until after this time will you endeavor to discover the identity of anyone with whom you may be associated. These are the specifications of our contract, and you must solemnly promise to perform them strictly, if you undertake this simple case," and he smiled cynically at the euphemism of his final remark.

I pondered deeply a few moments. Wealth, mystery and adventure are a powerful combination; they were too much for me, and taking a sudden, if rash, resolution, I said: "I will take the case." In justice to myself, I must say that I had no time to consider what this employment involved, and, when my assent was once obtained, no opportunity was given for retraction. Under direction of my employer, Mr. Nimmer at once paid me twenty-one hundred dollars in large bills.

"This is your first week's salary, in advance," said Mr. Nemo. "You will be paid weekly in advance, except the contingent fee, which will be paid if you deserve it. Now, with uplifted hand, pledge your word of honor that you will perform your duties strictly to the letter."

I did so, and his voice trembled with emotion as he said: "Good-bye. Mr. Nemo may be no more before your work is ended."

Mr. Nimmer and I withdrew. A carriage was awaiting us outside and we were at once driven to various shops, where a complete outfit of clothing, shoes and other articles was ordered to supply the deficiencies of my wardrobe. We were then driven to the Forty-second street railway station, where I found my trunk awaiting me.

I went by train and stage-coach to the village of Ivyvale. I passed a week at this village in solitude, spending the monotonous hours in fishing, desultory reading and pondering deeply and somewhat regretfully on the singular conditions of my employment.

Mr. Nimmer came to Ivyvale the following week, and when we reached the city, late in the evening, we drove

up Fifth avenue. Our carriage stopped before one of the finest residences on that street of palaces. Mr. Nimmer conducted me to splendid apartments in the second story, where all the articles ordered the previous week were awaiting my arrival.

"So far, we have not spoken of our peculiar position," Mr. Nimmer remarked the next morning during our late breakfast. "I say 'our,' for I, too, am forced to earn my hire like yourself. This undertaking shocks all my better impulses, and I have vainly tried to persuade our employer to accomplish his purposes by other means. He is imperious, unreasoning, yes, even remorseless, and persists in following his own plan. I am completely in the power of this man, and am forced to do his bidding. Do not make my bitter task harder than is necessary."

"What is this task?" I inquired.

"I am pledged not to tell you," he answered. "I know much more of this mystery than yourself, yet am far from knowing it all, but a fortune depends on the success of your conduct of this matter, simple as it may seem to you. Do not ask me to tell you more, but for heaven's sake perform your duties strictly as you have promised."

"Never fear, my word has been given, and will be kept," I replied.

Mr. Nimmer sat by my side as we rode in a splendid equipage through Central Park that afternoon. Nothing peculiar occurred, except that several gentlemen appeared to regard us with surprise, and also with anger and contempt, when their salutations were not returned. We always drove quite slowly, and the following day I noticed an elegant landau in which were seated two ladies. One was probably sixty years of age, coarse-featured, stout, overdressed and vixenish and repulsive in appearance; the other was apparently about thirty-five years old, sharp-featured, yellow-haired, thin-lipped, with cold gray eyes deeply set under a scowling brow. She reminded me at the same time of a cat and a wasp. These ladies regarded us with curiosity as they passed, nodding

coldly. Neither of us recognized the salute, to the evident astonishment and chagrin of the two ladies.

During the succeeding days men whose salutations I had failed to notice grew more contemptuous in their treatment, averting their heads in anger or disgust, and not only the ladies we had slighted on the second day, but others, showed marked disapproval of my conduct.

The evenings were passed in the library adjoining my sleeping-room. Each night the electric bell of the front-door was rung many times, and I often heard voices raised in angry expostulation at the doorway. Mr. Nimmer, however, attended the door himself, and no one was permitted to cross the threshold.

Toward the close of the week, as we drove through the Park, there came riding toward us a queenly girl, a perfect type of brunette beauty, stately in demeanor and proud of carriage. She was mounted on a spirited horse, which she controlled with much ease and grace. She jauntily raised her whip as a sign of salutation as she approached. I regarded her coldly and unconcernedly, but the blush of shame and humiliation mantled my cheek at this fulfilment of my hateful promise which required the commission of such an outrage.

"Oh, Hector! dear Hector!" she addressed me, an expression of surprise and sorrow sweeping over her features, "I heard of this and have traveled many miles to convince myself that you were wronged and slandered. Do you realize the awful fate which awaits you if you persist in your wretched course? Do you know what is being said of you? Arouse yourself before the penitentiary shall yawn for you and you become a wretched outcast."

"I shall persevere in my present course to the end, come what may," I responded calmly, summoning all my resolution. "Pray trouble yourself about me no further."

"Headstrong as you are," she rejoined, "I hope this may not be true. I shall call at your residence this even-

ing to endeavor to persuade you to change your mind. Surely you are not entirely lost to honor and to decency."

Tears were in her eyes as she rode away. That evening the ringing of the door-bell was almost constant and the protests at the door were loud and violent, but no one was admitted to the house.

The next morning Mr. Nimmer seemed perturbed and deeply troubled.

"Difficulties and dangers are gathering around you," he announced dolefully. "The plot thickens faster than Mr.—Mr.—I beg pardon—Nemo foresaw. You will have another companion henceforth on your rides. Be brave; it is possible I may fear perils which do not exist."

For the first time I felt my heart chill as I contemplated my peculiar employment. What were these dangers? The beautiful equestrienne had spoken of the penitentiary. Was it possible that I was the centre of a great criminal conspiracy?

Mr. Nimmer accompanied me to the carriage when it arrived. Seated therein was a beautiful girl, tastefully and elegantly dressed, of about twenty years of age. Her dark chestnut hair fell in wavy masses from her head. Her countenance had that saintly expression, that angelic innocence which made the fame of Raphael's Madonnas. Her complexion was olive, smooth and clear, while her cheeks were tinted with conscious blushes as her large, luminous brown eyes looked into mine. A bewildering premonition that she would be to me the one woman in the world swept over me and I trembled with emotion.

"Eudora, permit me to present a friend," said Mr. Nimmer.

The girl drew back from me with an appearance of aversion amounting almost to horror.

"How dare you approach me again, after your villainous conduct?" she cried excitedly, indeed angrily.

"Miss Eudora," said Mr. Nimmer quickly, but very earnestly, "you are deeply in error; you have never before met this gentleman."

"Miss Eudora," I said gravely, my voice revealing my deep distress, "I have never had the pleasure of meeting you until this moment, but if you prefer not to ride with me, I do not wish to annoy you."

"Yes, the voice is very different, but the resemblance of the features is marvelous," she replied, a faint smile sweeping over her Cupid-bow lips. "Pardon my error," she continued, "I regret having mistaken you for another—an abandoned and heartless villain."

Having taken my place in the carriage, we were driven up the Avenue.

"Sir, I trust you will not despise me for driving out with you, alone, in circumstances like the present," said Eudora impulsively, turning toward me.

"Despise you!" I exclaimed. "Heaven forbid. Has anyone ever failed to treat you with respect?"

"You cannot imagine to what a girl is subjected when she is helpless and unprotected. When my father lost his fortune by the rascality of his trusted friend, and died of a broken heart, I was just finishing my education at a famous boarding-school, and came home to find nothing saved from the wreck, while I had my invalid and helpless mother to support. I will spare you a recital of how easily my situations were obtained, and how insult after insult forced me to relinquish them. My spurning of insults made me enemies, and at last every door seemed closed against me. I had pawned my last decent dress when this mysterious employment was offered to me. My remuneration for this service seems to me an immense sum, and all I have to do is to ride in Central Park. Is this some trap? Tell me if it is, and I will leave this carriage and return the beautiful dresses which were made for me, I know not why."

"I beg you, Miss Eudora," I replied, "to distress neither yourself nor me. You can feel perfectly secure in my presence. I know of no trap, and will protect you, no matter what dangers we may both be facing. Do you know

why you were selected for this employment?"

"On account of my resemblance to someone else," she answered. "I don't know whom, but hundreds of men stared impudently at me as the carriage came up the Avenue. Lest my good name may be assailed, let me show you marks of identification which probably no one else possesses."

She turned down the glove on her right hand, revealing on her wrist a faint scar in the shape of a cross; then, lifting the wavy brown locks from her left ear, she showed me on the lobe an almost imperceptible pink, crescent-shaped birth-mark, which, as she blushed under my gaze, intensified into a deep crimson.

Eudora's employment seemed similar to my own, although I judged her compensation was much less. I was too much engaged in reassuring Eudora to observe how we were regarded that afternoon, but she blushed occasionally under stares more rude than usual, and especially when the fair equestrienne, who had evinced so much interest in Hector, glanced at us with an expression of deep disgust, turning away her head.

During the succeeding days the two ladies who rode in the landau seemed to take additional, spiteful interest in me, and as we passed each other slowly, one afternoon, the older one, evidently addressing me, muttered: "Miserable, cowardly thief!" On the second day thereafter, while we were passing them, the younger woman drew a rawhide whip from under the carriage rug and struck a vicious blow at Eudora, her aim evidently being to mark her face. With a quick grasp I caught the descending lash, tore it from the vixen's hand and threw it into the carriage.

For Eudora and myself the days had been passing away like dreams. The common mystery which surrounded us drew us together. Our wooing was sweet, even amid unknown and mysterious perils. I felt, after this attack, that I should have the right to protect my sweetheart, and our troth was plighted that afternoon.

The next day at luncheon Mr. Nimmer said: "A crisis is approaching. We will resume our drives together to-day."

As we drove toward the upper end of the Park a carriage came toward us in which was seated an elderly, gray-haired man whose presence was an insult to any chaste woman. So malodorous and notorious was his reputation that even I, a stranger, knew him by his infamous nickname, "The Millionaire Angel." An elderly lady occupied the front seat, but what was it that struck me like a blinding flash of lightning? By his side there sat Eudora, my Eudora, with her gloved hand calmly resting on his arm. She noticed my glance of horror, but her only apparent response was a smile of amusement. I actually felt faint under the overpowering mingled emotions of rage, shame, humiliation and jealousy.

Mr. Nimmer consented to drive home immediately. Several persons tried, ineffectually, to speak to us on the homeward drive. At the door of the house, however, was a man not to be evaded. He approached me and laid his hand on my shoulder.

"Hector," he asked, "will you turn over the money, or shall we let the law take its course?"

"Do as you like," I answered, "I have taken nothing and can make no restitution."

"Then your time is short," he replied. "At any rate, your ruin is on your own head. Who could have believed that you were such a miserable scoundrel, coward and thief?"

Before I could make any reply, or even gather myself to strike him, Mr. Nimmer seized my arm and hurried me into the house, going at once to the library and requesting me not to visit my own room. I heard noises there, as if the room were being ransacked, but the intervening door was locked.

While we were at dinner that evening there was a clamor at the front-door. I heard loud, excited voices and the words, "warrant," "arrest," "thief," then the door was violently closed. Mr. Nimmer's voice was almost drowned

by the heavy blows, apparently of hammers, which then rained upon the front-door.

"Come," he said, "it is almost too late; you must leave this house at once."

"Am I threatened with arrest?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I will not go," I replied; "I am not a criminal."

"You must go," he responded. "Your three weeks have passed; you must quit this house at once. Your word of honor is pledged to go instantly to the place provided for you. Your own safety demands this also. Remember your contract, your promise. You have won your twenty thousand dollars, too. Do not ruin all now, at the last."

I yielded. We went out by a side-door, and took a cab standing a little way down the street. A policeman followed us, but we were too swift for him. A few minutes later the cab stopped in front of a large apartment-house. I found an elegantly furnished suite of rooms prepared for me. Costly paintings were on the walls, the furniture was new and luxurious, and the windows looked out upon a small park.

"This," said Mr. Nimmer, "is your new home, rented for a year; all the furnishings are yours, and your effects were removed here early this evening. All is provided for your comfort if you will quietly remain here and not seek to probe this mystery. Will you allow me to shave your mustache now?"

"Yes, I suppose I must," I answered reluctantly.

He performed the operation, and then clipped my hair closer than I have worn it since I fought prizefights with my boyhood companions. As I was quite nervous, Mr. Nimmer persuaded me to take a sleeping-potion.

"You were paid yesterday for a week in advance," he said, "but we will make no deduction." Then, placing on the table twenty thousand dollars and suddenly saying, "Good-bye; remember my advice," he left the room.

It was after dark the following day when I awoke. The sleeping-potion had evidently been very powerful. I

hardly recognized my features when I looked in the mirror, the change was so great.

Two days later, while walking in Central Park, I again saw the supposed Eudora riding with the complacent millionaire. Stopping a man, I asked: "Do you know that lady?"

"That lady! Well, where have you been? That is Cleoncita, the great French singer. Go to the music-hall where she sings, if you are predisposed to form her acquaintance."

I knew the name. The whole world knows it, and knows—well, what does it really know? I went to the manager of the music-hall that evening, and requested an introduction to Cleoncita.

"She is much maligned," said he. "She has a reputation which would shame Catherine of Russia, yet she is as chaste as the virgin snow on the summit of Mont Blanc. Who can blame her for fooling a prince or a millionaire out of a few diamonds, simply by riding in a park with her admirers?"

His words stunned me, as if the thrust were a personal one, but there was no trace of innuendo in his manner.

He introduced me to Cleoncita later in the evening. I asked her only two questions.

"Will you permit me to see your right hand?"

"Yes, certainly." She extended it. It was fair, slim, firm and graceful, with no scar upon the wrist.

"Can I see your left ear?"

"What!" she exclaimed. "I beg your pardon. I comb my hair over my ears. Some people are malicious enough to say I have none." Blushing, she raised a tress of hair. No crimson crescent blazed before my eyes. I thanked the singer with the saint-like face for her courtesy, and withdrew.

With my mind at ease regarding Eudora, I took active measures to solve the mystery of my employment. The house on Fifth avenue was in charge of a very deaf old care-taker, who said he did not know the owner, who was in Europe. The house on Thirty-fourth street was vacant, and a rental agent's card was on the door.

I drove to his office and inquired pointedly about the former occupant.

"No private detectives need spy around this office," the agent answered brutally. "You look too much like a decent man for your miserable calling."

Still determined, I went to a private detective agency, but was not allowed to tell my story. After the first few sentences the manager said: "No; we don't want your case. We don't deal with cranks," and as I left the room his assistants said: "Nice-looking young fellow. Pity he's off, isn't it?"

That evening I met two college classmates—one of them a young clergyman—who were stopping at an uptown hotel. They received me rather coldly, but I needed advice, and so told my story. My ministerial friend looked very solemn.

"It is bad enough," he observed, "to win an immense sum of money by gambling without lying about it afterward. Several college men knew you in the gambling-hells, although you refused to recognize them. Reform while there is yet time; you are not yet wholly lost."

Before I could even make any denial or explanation, my other classmate gave his view of the matter.

"And another thing," he began, "don't imagine you can hide your sins because you are comparatively a stranger in the city. You ought to have dreamed a better story than this, while you lay stupefied in the opium dens of this city, out of one of which a friend endeavored to drag you, notwithstanding your denials of your identity. At any rate, don't tell this monstrous yarn to anyone who knows you."

For a month I hunted and guardedly advertised for Eudora, but found none who ever heard of her. I opened my law-office with some little success, and joined the Culture Club, composed of college graduates. Friends surrounded me, and my life was luxurious, but this unfathomable mystery, awful in its scope and far-reaching in its ramifications, oppressed me like a nightmare.

At last, grown desperate, I determined to seek some clue through advertisement. This I prepared with the greatest care, in order to guard against any revelation of my own identity in the case, but I embodied in the paragraph the distinctive names by which I knew the various parties most concerned, and some of the more striking events that might tend to attract comment. This advertisement I caused to be inserted in the leading newspapers in America and England.

II

IN the few days immediately following this publication my office was inundated by letters addressed to "X," the signature I had given.

Among countless others came this, which bore neither date nor address:

SIR:

I know an athletic young man bearing the name Hector, and the college nickname "Fuzzy Wuzzy," the latter being humorously given him on account of his dark complexion and his long black hair being worn, as the boys alleged, in the Soudanese fashion. Strange stories are told concerning him. His wealth has saved him in some instances from merited punishment. He is intensely selfish, cold-blooded and cruel, having been expelled from a college football team because he deliberately maimed opposing players.

Perhaps he is not criminal, but I would be loth to trust either his morality or his mercy if I stood in his way. With him, the only sin would be the sin of being found out. I am his enemy. He has many. One of them may have wished to injure him by employing you. His present address is Hector A. Duvinage, Portland Place, London, England.

Respectfully,

COURTLAND MANSFIELD.

A cablegram was sent to a firm of solicitors in London, requesting that inquiries be made regarding Mr. Duvinage. Two days later the following answer was received:

Party lives seventy-nine B, Portland Place; fine establishment; black hair, dark complexion, brown eyes, six feet tall, athletic, millionaire.

The personal description being similar to my own, and my partner having

agreed to take charge of our business, I determined to meet Mr. Duvinage, although it involved an ocean voyage. Ten days later I was in London, installed in comfortable apartments near Portland Place.

From the rear room of my suite one could see a part of Mr. Duvinage's residence, in fact, could walk over low roofs to a window of his library in the second story. I called the following day at the residence of Mr. Duvinage, handing the servant my card.

"What business?" he asked.

"Business I can discuss only with Mr. Duvinage," I answered.

The servant soon returned, saying his master refused to receive anyone who declined to state his business, and closed the door.

Mr. Birch, the junior member of the firm of solicitors I had employed, invited me the next evening to dine at the Bachelor Club, saying that Mr. Duvinage was often there during the evening. While my young friend and I were seated in the reception-room of the club a tall, dark, well-dressed gentleman entered the room. It was like seeing myself in a mirror, so startling was the resemblance. An introduction followed, and he presented a card bearing the name Hector Arton Duvinage. We conversed pleasantly a few minutes, and he impressed me as being a cultivated man of the world, although somewhat haughty in his bearing.

Glancing a second time at the card I noticed the middle name.

"Arton," I observed, "is a peculiar name. My mother's twin sister, Harriet Worden, married a gentleman of that name."

The change in Mr. Duvinage's manner was sudden. With a surprised and malevolent glance he responded: "Yes, she was disowned by her family, I believe."

"Was her husband a relative of yours?" I asked.

"Yes, but I am not seeking to claim kinship," and there was covert sarcasm in his tone.

"My visit to England is for the purpose of gaining from you some informa-

tion on a subject of deep interest to myself," I continued.

"A family matter, no doubt," he replied. "Why did you not say so when you called at my residence? It must now await a more convenient occasion. It is unusual to accost a gentleman on personal matters at his club. No offense, simply a lesson in the usages of polite society," and there came into his eyes a viperish and vengeful gleam.

I felt suddenly bewildered and confused. Where had I seen that glance before? Somewhere those baleful eyes had looked into mine, but where? My cheeks flushed with anger at his stinging reproof, but I controlled my feelings, making no response as he passed on through the room. Mr. Birch was both astounded and chagrined at his peculiar conduct.

During the next few days I made persistent attempts to obtain at least a short interview with this man, but in vain. I wondered what could be the cause of his conduct. Did he know of my having personated him in New York, or was he maintaining the family feud to which he had alluded?

One day while walking in Regent's Park a lady came toward me with a look of recognition in her eyes.

"Hector, dear Hector," she began, "I have tried in vain to see you during the last two days. I urge you to forego your design regarding Eudora and our young countryman. It is both criminal and——"

Recognizing her as the fair equestrienne who had evinced so much interest in Hector when we met in Central Park, as quickly as I could summon my thoughts I interrupted her: "Pardon me, madame, I am not Hector, but his counterpart, whom you met in New York."

"Is it possible I can be a second time in error?" she cried in astonishment.

We exchanged cards. Hers bore the name Olive Darrell.

"Perhaps my remarks were unguarded," she said. "I have a deep interest in thwarting one cherished plan of Mr.

Duvinage's. In four days he will be my husband."

"What do you know of Eudora, and where is she?" I asked.

"Pardon me. I cannot, in honor, betray the secrets of Mr. Duvinage, but Eudora is in no great danger. Take warning for yourself. You are in imminent peril if you cross Hector's path. Have you not injured him enough already?"

Her words puzzled me. What hold could Mr. Duvinage have on Eudora? Had he learned of her employment in New York and was he endeavoring to wreak vengeance on her for that reason?

Returning home I wrote and sent the following note:

MR. HECTOR ARTON DUVINAGE.

SIR: I cannot permit the marriage of yourself and Miss Olive Darrell to take place until the address of Miss Eudora is in my possession. This is not a threat, but fair warning. Please grant me an interview immediately.

When I had signed and despatched this note I felt more at ease. I reasoned that Mr. Duvinage would grant the interview as the easiest way out of a dilemma. As I pondered more deeply on the matter, however, the warning of Miss Darrell came to my mind, and I felt less self-satisfied, and finally sent for Mr. Birch.

When informed of my action regarding the note he was evidently alarmed. He said frankly that it was a striking instance of a lawyer who manages his own case having a fool for a client. While we were discussing the best plan of action under the untoward circumstances a telegram was brought to me. It was from London, sent to New York and repeated to London. Omitting the address, it read as follows:

Just read your advertisement. Am in London, with mother, under strict guard of Raymond, my employer. Am ignorant of my address. Come to London immediately. Will try to have address await you at Markham's Hotel. Speed the day!

EUDORA LANIER.

I went at once to Markham's Hotel, but, as I expected, there could as yet be no letter there for me. The mes-

sage puzzled me. Eudora was in London, in the clutches of someone named Raymond, yet subject to the persecution of Mr. Duvinage. The more I studied the matter the deeper grew the mystery of my strange employment.

Mr. Birch advised that detectives be employed, some to watch Mr. Duvinage's residence, in the hope of discovering the whereabouts of Raymond, through his communicating with Mr. Duvinage, and three to guard my own person, as he believed me to be in serious danger from the criminal designs to which Miss Darrell had referred.

Up to the evening of the following day no answer to my note had been received. Mr. Birch passed the day with me, and a little after six o'clock in the evening we went to dine at Tavistock's, the detectives following us. When returning from dinner Mr. Birch stepped into a chemist's shop to make a purchase. I was slowly walking on alone, when suddenly a sack was thrown over my head and I was seized by three men, who hurried me toward a carriage. Mr. Birch, having quitted the shop, rushed toward me crying, "Murder!" and at the same time our three detectives pressed forward with loud outcries. The cabman, becoming alarmed and eager to escape, drove off. My assailants at once released me and ran in different directions. We captured two of them, however, and took them to my rooms.

"For whom are you acting?" I asked one of them.

"I shall not tell," he answered.

"Be careful. You are a criminal. You will be put in charge of the police instantly, unless you give me the name of your employer, which, however, I know without your confession: Mr. Hector A. Duvinage," said I.

"I am not sure," he replied, "what our employer would desire done under the circumstances."

"Tell, or take the consequences."

"Well, we were acting for Mr. Duvinage, but were honest in our intentions. He said you were a lunatic."

It at once became evident to Mr. Birch and myself that the criminal in-

tention of Mr. Duvinage was to confine me in a private lunatic asylum. He would soon know of the failure of his plan. Action must be taken at once, or Eudora would be lost to me forever, as well as all chance of solving the mystery which surrounded my employment.

Turning to that one of my assailants who had spoken, I said: "Put your statement briefly in writing." He did so, and both of them signed it. We then tied their hands and feet together, and left them in charge of one of my servants.

"Mr. Birch," said I, "I am going to change my appearance slightly, and at once force my way into the presence of Mr. Duvinage."

"The enterprise is very hazardous, the danger very great," he responded.

"I know it," I returned, "but the only woman I ever loved is in danger from this man. She may be lost to me forever if I hesitate. If I fail, I can lose no more."

"I will not dissuade you from your course, under the circumstances, but will aid you if I can," was his response.

"Unless I signal you from the window of Mr. Duvinage's library in half an hour, go to a magistrate and secure a warrant for his arrest. Two hours later break down the doors. You may find my dead body within. Have the house guarded on all sides by our detectives, and under no circumstances let Mr. Duvinage pass out in the meantime."

Going to the house in Portland Place, I rang the bell violently.

"What do you mean by putting on the latch and locking me out?" I asked the servant angrily, when he came to the door. He took me for his master and drew back in dismay. Passing up the stairway and throwing open the library-door, for the first time I was alone with Hector Arton Duvinage. As he rose up, manifesting surprise and anger, there was such domination and malevolence in his glance that my mind was bewildered and confused. The same emotion I had felt when I met this man at the club was now intensified until it became a chill, that nameless

curdling chill you are said to experience when one steps on your grave.

It needed his insults to recall me.

"Scoundrel!" he cried. "When doors are closed against you, like vermin you creep into houses by night!"

"Mr. Duvinage," I responded, "my business here is not to bandy insults with you, but to demand from you the address of a certain young lady, and also a written explanation of the causes of your criminal course toward me tonight."

He resumed his seat at a massive table drawn close before a very large fireplace in which the ashes were deep, although there was no fire. Suddenly opening a drawer he grasped a revolver. I remained perfectly calm. He appeared disconcerted at my lack of action.

"You prate of criminals. Why should I not lay you dead at my feet as a burglar?" he asked angrily.

"You know why you do not."

"Why?"

"Because, as Courtland Mansfield says, with you the only sin is the sin of being found out," I replied. At the words "Courtland Mansfield" he became livid, and the contortions of his features were like those of a writhing demon.

"The hell-hound, the damnable villain! So it was he that gave you my address. What has the sin of being found out to do with our affairs?" He still held the revolver.

"Have you noticed," I asked, "that I am unarmed, and have made no attempt at defense, notwithstanding all your braggadocio? Read this." I handed him the statement of his accomplices.

"If there is no signal from this window in half an hour," I resumed, "a warrant will be asked for your arrest. Two hours later Mr. Birch will break down your doors. This house is guarded front and rear. You cannot escape. In England you cannot corrupt officers of the law, as it has been hinted you have done in your own land. Your wedding day will be passed behind the bars unless you make the required

statement and give me the address I demand. Besides, none but a coward would attack an unarmed man."

He laid down the revolver and pondered deeply for the space of two or three minutes.

"I have never been compelled to do anything against my will," he said. "What is it you want?"

"A statement of the causes of your criminal action toward me, and the address of Miss Eudora Lanier."

"Ah! that is your family affair, is it? You, of all people in the world, should know the causes of my actions toward you—you vile personator!"

"So you know of that?" said I. "Your statement, then, will clear the mystery which surrounds my employment."

"What am I to have if I furnish the address and make this statement?" he asked.

"Freedom from arrest for the crime of attempted abduction," I answered.

"It is not enough," he rejoined; "I must impose three conditions. First, I must be permitted to go to my study for a document from which I wish to quote in the statement. Second, I shall write and seal a note. You, subscribing the envelope, will put it in your pocket. Third, you will not open this note nor the statement, which will also be sealed, for three weeks from this date."

Fearing treachery, I went through the rooms. The only door to the library was that opening into the hall. This I locked and bolted at the top and bottom. The study was simply an alcove, with curtains hanging over the communicating archway. No one was in either room. I thought over the conditions and then accepted them.

Mr. Duvinage went at once to the study, and I took the opportunity to quietly draw the cartridges from the revolver still lying on the table, and then went to the window and made the agreed signal to Mr. Birch, whom I saw standing at a window of one of my own rooms.

During the time he was in the study Mr. Duvinage apparently talked to

himself, his language being interspersed with oaths. I looked into the room as he came out; it was empty.

Separating several sheets from a pad of writing-paper, Mr. Duvinage wrote for a few minutes, signing his name near the bottom of the second page. Enclosing the two sheets in an envelope, he passed it and the pencil to me, and looked at his watch.

"Write," he said: "'Received this enclosure at 9.12 P.M.' Sign your name, and place the envelope in your pocket."

As I did so I saw his eyes light up with a gleam of triumph, and a sinister smile stole over his features.

Seizing a pencil, Mr. Duvinage now wrote quite rapidly for over an hour, placing the sheets, bottom upward, upon the table. He was still writing rapidly when he suddenly looked up, and a change came over his features.

"The time is up," he exclaimed, and hesitated a moment as if doubtful whether he should continue writing. He regarded me with an expression of curiosity, and there was a cruel, cynical smile on his face as he added a few lines and then laid the final sheet with the rest upon the table.

"Under existing circumstances," he began, and there was a covert threat in his tone which startled me, "I do not wish to deprive you of the address you so much desire. It is Number 39 Forrest Road, St. John's Wood, London."

"This is a true statement," he continued. "I have not spared you. It does not give a very full account of your charmer."

"What do you know of Eudora?" I asked.

"Nothing much. Eudora is at least as sinless as her double, who——"

Those were the last words I ever heard from the lips of Hector Arton Duvinage. As I sprang at him, in blind, ungovernable rage, I saw the light of victory flaring in his face. He had gained that for which he had been striving—to provoke me to an attack, so that he could kill me. The deadly

glitter of triumphant murder was in his eyes.

How that scene rises before me now! Duvinage, by a swift blow, staggers me, turning me partially round, and I see behind me another man. How could he have gained entrance here? The door is still locked. I recognize him instantly, and now know there will be a desperate struggle for those scribbled pages upon the table. With the deadly energy of despair I spring at Duvinage. He snaps the revolver in my face; being unloaded, no report follows. He brings it down upon my head, cutting a small vein in my temple as I spring aside, but his accomplice, already grappling me from behind, receives almost the full force of the blow, and falls stunned on the floor. Heavy blows are now being rained upon the door. Then begins a struggle for life. We grapple, we wrestle, fiercely and blindly, around the room. Now—oh, horror of horrors!—his hand is closing in a vise-like grip around my throat. Lifting my antagonist by a desperate effort, we fall together to the floor, our heads within a foot of the fireplace. Again the hand closes with that awful grip. The blood is pouring from the vein in my temple, gradually sapping my strength. A sudden thought, such as is said to come to the dying, lightning-like, illumines my mind. One chance remains. Bracing my feet against the heavy table I steadily force his head toward the fireplace. He struggles desperately. The grip on my throat weakens a little. Slowly, slowly, with teeth set and every muscle strained, nearer, nearer, inch by inch, while his fiendish eyes gleam now with terror as well as rage, I force his head into the ashes lying in the unused fireplace; now the top of his head reaches them; now they are falling over his brow; now his nostrils are in them; he holds his breath; suddenly he is forced to inhale them; struggling, writhing, he opens his eyes, only to be blinded; another breath: he is losing his strength; his grip on my throat relaxes; he breathes once more; strangling, chok-

ing, coughing weakly; and now he is silent; he has fainted, lying in the ashes.

My name is called at the window. Mr. Birch has come across the roofs and raised it. He implores me to leave the room instantly. The blows upon the door are redoubled in force. The upper bolt is broken. In a moment more the door will give way. I arise, snatch the statement from the table and give a final glance at the form of Hector Arton Duvinage lying in the fireplace. There he lies in the ignominious position to which his unhallowed passions have brought him. Domineering, arrogant, haughty, overbearing, he came into my life. Defeated, crushed, overthrown, humbled in the dust, he passes out of it.

With Mr. Birch's assistance I climbed through the window as the door was giving way, and went slowly to my apartments. I briefly narrated to him the events of the evening, gave him Eudora's address and then, overcome by the loss of blood, I fell unconscious.

When I became fully sensible several days had passed away. Eudora was sitting by my side. She called her mother from an adjoining room and introduced me to her. Eudora knew of my struggle with Mr. Duvinage, and the statement he had made—the latter had been sealed in an envelope.

"Yes, but soon we will open it," said I, "and then the dark clouds of mystery which have surrounded us will roll away."

"I fear the contrary," she replied. "Who can tell what vile slanders concerning us the statement may contain?"

"If this be your fear, Eudora, be mine, in trust and confidence, and let us read the statement when our honeymoon is waning. No villain's words can then mar our joy."

She assented, and our wedding day was fixed for the following week.

Mr. Duvinage had been led to a carriage on the day after our contest. It was reported that he was blind. His marriage to Miss Olive Darrell did not

take place in London, at least, and the only news of him since received was an item in a newspaper, stating that he was living in retirement near Monaco.

A month later, sitting in a cozy nook on the deck of an ocean steamer, homeward bound, I told anew to my wife the story of the struggle, and took the two packets from my pocket. I opened the small envelope first.

THE NOTE

9.04 P.M. A few minutes since the hireling who personated me in New York forced himself into my library, personating me in my own house, combining blackmailer and burglar at the same time. He threatens me with disgrace unless I comply with certain of his fanciful demands.

Through a speaking-tube in my study I have communicated with Raymond, have sent him for detectives to break down the library-door. When they arrive Raymond, by aid of a ladder, will come through a window in the study, back of this man. Until that time I shall strive to comply with this wretch's demands, but, if he becomes violent, I must defend myself. A loaded revolver is on my table.

This is written in advance, to show the situation, and before complying with this blackmailer's demands I shall force him to sign his name across the flap of the envelope which contains this note and put it in his pocket. If the worst comes, his blood must be on his own head.

HECTOR ARTON DUVINAGE.

I felt my heart almost cease beating as I recognized with what fiendish deliberation my murder had been planned. What could have been the motive for such deliberate diabolism? Eudora was silent. The vileness of this man was beyond the comprehension of her pure soul.

I broke the seal of the large envelope which contained my double's statement.

STATEMENT OF HECTOR ARTON DUVINAGE

I write this plain story to gain time for my purposes; not because a scoundrel forces me to do so.

My father, Rufus Arton, followed several vocations—architect, actor, landscape gardener. While he was a strolling actor he eloped with Harriet Worden. The dramatic company to which he belonged being stranded shortly after his marriage, my parents

returned to my mother's old home. Her indignant father drove them from his door, actually horse-whipping the husband. From that time my mother never heard from her people, and regarded them with feelings of deadly hatred. Inheriting her passionate nature, I inherit the intense hatred. How it throbs in my heart tonight!

Arthur Duvinage, a retired millionaire of New York, employed my father as his gardener in a park on his estate near that city. Mr. Duvinage was a bachelor. His niece, Fannie Tallman, lived with him. My father's eldest sister, Tabitha Arton—an old maid—had been for many years Duvinage's housekeeper.

Mr. Duvinage had a savage temper, and the gout, from which he was a sufferer, made him constantly irritable. He was a terror to his servants, and every woman in his household feared him.

I grew up amid bitter quarrels and daily scenes of violence, but in the strange fearlessness of childhood I was the only one who did not tremble before Arthur Duvinage. I was imperious in having my own way, and stormed with raging passion if all were not in subjection to my wishes. Result: I dominated the old man; he was a slave to my caprices, recognized the kinship of our natures, and after my father's death adopted me as his son.

Arthur Duvinage had two passions, the making of his park a beautiful botanic garden and the drawing of wills, of which he made several. His last will left his country estate and two hundred thousand dollars to Fannie; his Fifth avenue mansion and the remainder of his personal property, worth over three million dollars, to me, with certain conditions.

Tabitha was to live with Fannie as chaperon, and I was to pay her a thousand dollars a month. When money became due to Tabitha it was to be paid only on demand, and if not paid within two days I was to forfeit to her a hundred dollars for each day's delay. This hell-cat's chief pleasure was to annoy me in every way possible,

calling for her money at my club, or stopping me on the street or in the park, to loudly demand it.

On my failure to marry Fannie when I reached the age of twenty-six, she being then thirty-five, all the personal property was to become hers. If she refused to marry me or married another, it was to become mine absolutely.

In case of my failure to marry Fannie I was to sell all securities, and turn over in cash to her the full value of the estate at the time it came into my hands, I being regarded, in that case, simply as trustee of the principal for Fannie.

As we had always fought like cats and dogs, Arthur Duvinage determined we should have peace after his death, if not during his life, and the sixteenth clause of his will read as follows: "Knowing the great love which exists between my adopted son Hector, my niece Fannie, and my friend Tabitha, and desiring that this affection may continue, I hereby provide that if any one of them shall seek to avoid any provision of this will, such person shall forfeit the legacy herein bequeathed, and furthermore, if any such legatee shall fail to accord cordial greeting and kindly recognition to the others, at all times, such person, so offending, shall forfeit all claim as legatee, under this my will. If Hector be in fault, all his legacy shall go to Fannie; if Fannie be in fault, all her estate shall go to Tabitha; if Tabitha be in fault, Hector shall no longer pay her the legacy bequeathed to her. Love one another is my command."

Although Fannie Tallman was inexpressibly repulsive, yet, until I reached the age of twenty-five, it was my intention to marry her. I had seen the world, and knew the wicked wiles of all women. One woman is only a little worse than another.

About a year since I met Miss Olive Darrell, a dashing and successful young actress belonging to an old Maryland family. I sought her conquest by means which I had usually found successful with others, but was soon given

to understand that for her, at least, courtship was not paved with improper intentions. It was marriage or no Olive. Lucky speculation had gained me a large fortune outside of my inheritance from Arthur Duvinage. I could afford to indulge a whim or a passion. Finally, piqued to the last degree by her resistance, I offered her marriage and was accepted.

I turned all my securities into money, to settle with Fannie. A lawyer she had employed, who had long been a fortune-hunting suitor for her hand, discovered my sale of securities, told Fannie of the fact, and she imagined I was about to embezzle the proceeds. The securities had depreciated so much that the amount realized by their sale was two hundred thousand dollars less than the appraised value of the property when it came into my hands.

I stated this fact to Fannie, who was already furious with jealousy, not because she loved me—that weakened old maid never loved anybody but herself—but because she hated every other woman.

"You will have to settle this with my attorney," she said, with diabolical suavity; "his instructions are to hold you strictly to account."

I consulted my attorneys. They said that they believed they could avoid this clause of the will, but would charge me two hundred thousand dollars to do so, and they could not guarantee success.

In a gambling-house, one night, several gentlemen persisted in calling me by another name, and became wroth when I refused to recognize them. Twice when I was seeing life in the metropolis the incident was repeated, once in an opium joint, and I had an altercation with a man who tried to drag me out of the place.

One evening a friend came hurriedly to my residence, to see if I were there. He could hardly believe his eyes when he saw me, so positive was he that he had met me, a few minutes before, at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-third street.

That evening, at my club, I met my

college chum, Professor Ralph, whom my double imagined had to be a detective, and Aldorf Masters, one of the wealthiest young men of New York, whom he had mistaken for a bunco-steerer. Their stories gave me a dim conception of the plan which during the evening I perfected.

I drove from the club to a house on Thirty-fourth street which I rented for certain purposes, not desiring to use my Fifth avenue residence: card-parties—we did not play old maid nor muggins—and suppers, with the accompaniments, wine, woman and song—I presume canting hypocrites would call them orgies.

I at once saw the great possibilities of my half-formed plan. My friend had left in my possession the card of my counterpart. I took my secretary, Raymond, whom my double afterward knew as Mr. Nimmer, partially into my confidence. He discovered, during the same evening, that my double was a starving young lawyer, an unlicked cub of the breed which will do anything for money.

The time for action was short. I sent Raymond to the lodgings of my counterpart, and the same day the latter came to my rented house. I was in bed, having been made up—I believe that is the theatrical term—as a feeble old man with pallid countenance. We made our bargain.

During the ensuing week I refused to pay Tabitha either the money due her or the penalty, ridiculing her and claiming to be poverty-stricken. I rode daily with Raymond in Central Park, treating my aunt and adopted cousin with great cordiality, telling Fannie of the superb beauty of my intended bride until her large gray eyes fairly flamed with jealousy. I told her she could get her money when I was ready to pay her, and no sooner.

The day before my double returned to the city I sailed for Europe, five friends, my lawyers among them, seeing me off, all being pledged to secrecy. I could trust no woman, and so did not inform Olive of my departure; she was in Baltimore at the time.

My co-legatees fell into the trap prepared for them. They were violent in their manifestations of hostility after the apparent refusal of recognition had seemingly forfeited all my claim to the estate, and when the supposed Cleoncita appeared with my double it roused the jealous Fannie to such a pitch that she accepted her fortune-hunting suitor. Fannie's wedding occurred on the day after my counterpart left my Fifth avenue residence. Her lawyer and lover had accosted my double on the previous evening, without any recognition being accorded to him. He then sought to have him arrested the same evening. Had his purpose been accomplished all my plans would have failed.

The day after the wedding I cabled my congratulations from London, and my attorneys soon convinced the covetous bridegroom that the millions of Duvinage would never be his.

While this farce was being played my friends and acquaintances, to whom no recognition was accorded by my double, were furious. They called at my Fifth avenue residence, demanding explanations which my secretary refused to give.

Fannie had caused rumors of my embezzlement of her funds to be circulated. Creditors sent in their bills and called regarding their claims. They were refused admittance, and as a result made all kinds of charges and threats. It is almost needless to say that I caused my double to change his appearance, after his employment ended, for his own protection.

My double had done his work well. My money was safe. I paid him liberally, furnished his home sumptuously, and provided for him all that heart could wish.

Eudora was a costumer's assistant. I saw her, assisting ladies with their costumes, at a masquerade ball given by one of New York's four hundred; noticed her marvelous resemblance to Cleoncita, gave her a hint of my admiration and even struggled for a kiss. She was puritanical, put on all kinds of scornful airs, babbled about insults

when I invited her to a jolly supper at my Thirty-fourth street house, and as a result of her prudery found herself without a situation when I spoke to her employer regarding the matter—adding a few embellishments, of course. Notwithstanding her mawkishness, Raymond found it easy to employ the sanctimonious little spitfire when I needed her for my purpose to provoke the jealousy of Fannie Tallman. When her work was done Raymond, at my suggestion, brought her, with her mother, to London, and has guarded them since, in order to keep the hypocritical little prude's connection with my affairs secret. I trust no woman.

Then all which had been so carefully planned and so skilfully executed was ruined, in a way no sensible man could have foreseen. This wretched fool and ingrate whom I had hired published an advertisement that spread the facts broadcast to the ends of the earth.

Several of my friends, who knew some of the circumstances, have connected me with this advertisement, have made it a matter of club gossip, and it is doubtful if I would now be able to maintain my position in New York society.

Until this infernal idiot came to London I knew nothing of the hateful kinship which exists between us. This man has cost me over thirty thousand dollars. He accomplished my purpose, but has nearly ruined me by his subsequent conduct. How my heart boils with rage and hate at the thought that I found one of this loathed Worden family almost a beggar on the streets of New York and made him wealthy.

My double has forced himself into my house. He has no right here. If he dies tonight, it establishes me in my social position. I shall have revenged myself on the crazy blackmailer who dared impersonate me, question my good name and assault me in my own house.

In regard to Raymond, whom my double knew as Nimmer, I need only say that when you can send a man to the penitentiary he will render you good service, especially if the reward

for his service be a certain incriminating document, and he is also—ah—the time is up . . . I know this statement will never be read. It will pass into the ashes in the fireplace.

Let me close my narrative of the events of the past with a glimpse at the present.

Raymond has just entered the study window. He is behind my visitor. What will happen when my double lays eyes on his friend Nimmer? Will he change that bewildered, puzzled look he wears as he scans me? I hear footsteps outside the door. Does this man over whom death hovers feel its approach? Has he any premonition how soon he will be lying upon this floor, a corpse? Who can tell? All is ready. My double's time to die has come.

As I finished the statement I arose, crying out in horror at the diabolism of this confession, this unutterable baseness, this murderous malignity almost beyond human comprehension.

Eudora was by my side.

"From the deep pit of such a life, my dearest," she said, her pure, lustrous eyes looking into mine, "turn your thoughts to the heaven of love and peace which is yours, and remember this murderous criminal brought you and me together. Do we owe him nothing for that?"

My eyes fell abashed at her words. Eudora is the good angel of my life. Let her gentle admonition end my story. As I look on her in all her matchless beauty, the hateful character of my cousin, Hector Arton Duvinage, grows dim in my mind, and I can even forgive my millionaire double.



THE CITY'S CHALLENGE

By Rhoda Hero Dunn

A CROSS the shadowed reaches of the night
 That, with its mystery of moon and star,
 Expands the mind until it leaps afar,
 Disdaining with a high Olympic might
 The sordid thoughts that petty days invite,
 I look—and where no earthly thing should mar
 The vast horizon, gleaming towers bar
 The darkness with great bands of glowing light!

O million-windowed city streets that flare
 A challenge to the moon! much must there be
 Of inspiration unrevealed to me,
 Within the heart of thy Titanic glare,
 Since for it men so willingly forswear
 This sight of night's star-strewn Infinity.

THE MOTHER INSTINCT

By Frederic Taber Cooper

IN lithe, silent, nervous haste Mrs. Guthrie passed back and forth, amid the disorder of the room she had grown to hate, tensely preparing for her furtive going. The waning light of a November day, coldly flung back from turquoise wall and ceiling, still mocked her sight with troops of capering cupids, that leered inanely from their frescoed bowers, witnesses of her most intimate humiliations. The gaudy carpet beneath her feet, sprawling its unnaturally vivid roses over a ground of strident blue, still obtruded itself from under scattered paper and string and pasteboard box-lid. Gloves and ribbons and filmy sleeves trailed from half-closed bureau drawers; skirts, waists and stockings cumbered the bed in a promiscuous heap. A sullen down-draft from the open fireplace sent fitful puffs of smoke into the room, diffusing the acrid odor of smoldering paper. The tumbled closet, the gaping bureau, the whole straggling litter of feminine apparel proclaimed the relentless thoroughness of the task.

Since morning, when the front-door closed behind her husband with its customary jarring slam, Evelyn Guthrie had been tirelessly selecting, rejecting, destroying, with that deliberate finality which one bestows upon the intimate, personal effects of the dead. The comparison occurred to her, in the very act of burning her letters. Figuratively, was she not dead already? Did not her present existence, her existence as Jacob Guthrie's wife, practically end when she sealed and despatched her note to Barton Fenway? Had she not signed her own social

death-warrant when she wrote, promising to leave home and child and husband for his sake, specifying the hour and the train?

As she laid out the dress that she meant to wear Mrs. Guthrie found herself vaguely wondering at the numbness of her mood. She felt no scruples, no foreboding, no shame at her decision, nothing but an intense physical unrest, a desperate impatience for the lagging hours to pass. Long months of racking incertitude had given place to a merciful lull, like the cessation of keen physical agony. She felt tonight infinitely removed from her past life, curiously detached from that tremulous vacillating former self, who had fought and wavered and struggled weakly, refusing to concede her own defeat, flaunting in her own face the prohibitive price she must pay for joy and liberty—a sinful liberty, a precarious joy. She could look back now with indifference to the remote hour when temptation had first assailed her—a fleeting, half-formed thought, indignantly banished from her startled mind. But it had come back, again and again, insistent, plausible, alluring, pointing the way to freedom. Without that wild longing of a caged creature to break its bars she knew that she would never have thrilled with quite such guilty gladness at the ardent homage of Barton's glance, the daring passion of Barton's pleading. It was not love alone that at last had broken down her barriers, but rather the slow accretion through nine long years of ennui and loathing and wounded pride. The imperious need of freedom had little by little encroached upon her, under-

mined her strength, possessed her like the craving for some potent drug, against which she struggled impotently. And half the time she had not cared to struggle: on the black days when unstrung nerves rebelled and Jacob's coarseness jarred beyond endurance; on blacker nights, when she lay, wide-eyed, staring up through the darkness at the ceiling where the frescoed cupids mocked her wretchedness, striving desperately not to listen to the ponderous breathing of the heavy sleeper beside her.

With a slight, fastidious shudder, Mrs. Guthrie turned impatiently to her bureau, forcing herself to practical forethought of gloves, hairpins and brushes, and thrusting from her the days and nights that haunted her like an evil dream. Oh, she was glad, glad, glad, that at last she had the courage to end it all; glad to escape to another mode of life, at no matter what price! Glad even to accept ignominy and ostracism, since they would form a barrier across which Jacob would never try to drag her back. How well she knew his cold scorn of women's frailties, the narrow, pitiless standard by which he judged them! She could already see his hard, selfish mouth set grimly, his keen gray eyes gleam remorselessly; she could already hear his curt orders to the servants to remove and obliterate all trace of such an unnatural wife and mother as herself. A fantastic longing welled up within her, to anticipate his wish, to sweep together in a comprehensive pile the lavish finery he had decked her with, and watch them blaze and shrivel and blacken in one consuming holocaust! The very clothes she wore seemed tainted, because they had been paid for with cheques bearing the name of Jacob Guthrie, in his big, blunt, aggressive signature.

Mastered by her sudden impulse to destroy, Mrs. Guthrie recklessly gathered up a heap of costly trifles and cast them upon the smoldering embers of her burnt letters. Here and there a tongue of flame, bursting through the thick smoke, licked greedily

ly at a feather boa, a bit of trailing lace, the fragile sticks of a painted fan. Some old photographs, unearthed in the course of the day's rummaging, fell face uppermost, their edges quickly curling with the heat. One was of Jacob, taken about the time of their marriage. As it blazed up, she thought how little he had changed since then. There were the same sharp eyes, the same hard, selfish mouth, the same suggestion of a futile effort to dress well, a vain attempt to play the gentleman. As the expiring sparks chased one another across the writhing cardboard she felt a guilty sense of having burned her own husband in effigy.

The child's picture was the next to flare up—his child, her child, the child whom in a few hours she meant to abandon. She stood there watching it indifferently. Why should she try to snatch it back? She wanted no keepsake of the little son whom she had never loved, scarcely ever thought of as belonging to her. Was she incomplete and abnormal, that she had never felt the stirrings of the mother instinct? From the first she had fiercely rebelled against maternity, hating the baby for its father's sake. Perhaps, she rarely confessed to herself, if it had proved to be a daughter, with tastes and features like her own, her whole life might have shaped itself differently; she might have borne a great deal for a daughter's sake. But a restless, noisy, arrogant little boy, the living image of the man she loathed, with all his father's obnoxious traits accentuated, could never waken her dormant motherhood. She remembered how she had recoiled when the nurse first laid the child upon the pillow beside her—how, with her whole being in revolt, she had wailed to have it taken away. Even then, in that unformed baby face, she had seen a grotesque caricature of Jacob Guthrie.

A third picture had slipped to the hearth, beyond the reach of the flames; an amateur snap-shot of her mother, taken in the sunny garden behind the old homestead, and showing just a corner of the shady side-porch, with its living canopy of trumpet-creeper. Obey-

ing a blind impulse, Evelyn Guthrie caught it up, and stood there studying its faded details, reluctantly evoking early memories. She saw herself again a moody girl, vainly rebelling against the dulness of a New England village; a retired professor's daughter, browsing too freely among her father's bookshelves, fostering her discontent with unwise reading, nursing a smoldering resentment against fate for burying her alive in her budding Springtime. And then one day fate had seemingly relented and flung young Guthrie and his money at her feet. Business, of course, had brought him to her town—for when, in all his life, did anything but big, important, lucrative business swerve Jacob five miles from his appointed orbit? But at the time she had not cared what brought him. He was her gilded opportunity, the first very rich man she had ever met. She recalled now, in impotent self-scorn, that it was under the screen of that identical trumpet-creeper that she had yielded him a facile conquest. Oh, if the time should ever come when she had a daughter hesitating on the brink of such a blunder, she would say things to her that would make her draw back in dumb shame from the loveless bargain and sale! Why, she asked in sudden resentment, why had her own mother not spoken in time to save her from her ignorance? And yet had she not always been intolerant of advice? Would anything her mother might have said have really deterred her from her marriage with Jacob? She knew in her heart that it would not. She knew that she would no more have listened then than she would tonight, if her mother were still alive and tried to save her from her reckless flight with Barton. Reluctantly, Evelyn interrogated the picture. The wise old eyes gazed back into her own, with their wonted look of tender concern. Impulsively she crossed over to the bureau, thrust the photograph face downward into the drawer and buried it deeply under a chaos of ribbons, handkerchiefs and laces.

The blaze had died down, accen-

tuating the gloom of the waning day. The clock upon the mantel, striking five, galvanized Mrs. Guthrie into renewed activity. Jacob would be home within an hour and there were a desperate number of things yet remaining to be done. Lowering the window-shades and switching on the lights that seemed to flaunt the disorder of the room in her face, she began to fling together the garments still waiting to be packed, thrusting them into the tray of the small steamer-trunk at the foot of the bed, crowding and shoving and forcing them down, with sudden indifference to the havoc of crushed millinery and crumpled waists. The paramount necessity was to get that trunk closed and locked and safely out of the house within the next fifteen minutes. When at last she was able to force the lid down and turn the key she gave one gasp of relief that was half a sob; next, beat a nervous tattoo on the electric button that summoned her maid, and then turned back to the bed, catching up the remaining litter of apparel by the armful and bundling it haphazard into the empty drawers and closet.

"Hilda, tell John to come up for this trunk. I want it to go at once, do you understand?—at once! It must be at the Grand Central by six o'clock. I—I promised to see that it got there in time," she concluded weakly, avoiding her maid's eyes, lest she should read wonderment and suspicion in them. "Wait, draw it out into the hall first. It isn't too heavy for you, is it, Hilda? I don't want John to come in here. I must dress for dinner."

After what seemed an endless delay she heard the nimble steps of the butler ascending, heard him seize the trunk, swing it around and tilt it upon his shoulder, and finally heard him carefully and deliberately descending again. One more detail of her flight safely arranged, she thought; she could relax now and give herself up to Hilda's ministrations. As the maid's deft fingers swiftly adjusted the pale coils of her hair, Evelyn watched her with a new intentness in the opposite mirror.

After tonight she would have to dispense with the services of a maid. After tonight she must go back to the ways of her girlhood, and learn again to wait upon herself, lace her own shoes, mend her own gloves, brush and braid and coil her own hair. She wondered vaguely whether she had not forgotten how, whether she would ever be able to duplicate that studied simplicity which Hilda achieved so easily for her, and which Barton had so often praised. With something akin to dismay, she foresaw herself struggling in vain to force her rebellious tresses to follow the old, natural, familiar lines.

The noisy clatter of small feet on the stairs, the shrill tones of a young voice raised in defiance, called Evelyn back to reality. "Lock the door, Hilda! I cannot have Anson in here now, with all this disorder. He would drive me wild with his meddling and his noise." The bolt was slipped not an instant too soon. There came a rattling at the knob, then a resolute pounding of small knuckles, while the shrill young voice vociferated angrily: "Let me in, I say, let me in! Mama, mama, let me in!"

"Stop that noise at once, Anson, and go upstairs with nurse," Evelyn called to him sharply. "You can't come in here now; mama is dressing for dinner." She could hear the nurse's low-spoken, ineffective coaxing from behind the closed door, "Come, Master Anson, be a good boy now! Come on up with me, as your mother tells you!" Then suddenly the child's angry screaming stopped, and there followed a series of vengeful kicks upon the polished panels of the door, delivered with all the force of sturdy young legs.

The insufferable child! In sheer exasperation Mrs. Guthrie sprang from her seat, heedless of Hilda's unfinished task, and snatched up the broken end of a trunk strap that trailed upon the carpet. This was the fruit of the father's persistent pampering, his foolish refusal to allow the boy to be properly punished. Well, for once at least she would give him a much needed

lesson in obedience, for once, before going, she would have the satisfaction of teaching Jacob's self-willed little son that he could not safely be impudent to her. Without warning she flung the door open so suddenly that the child, with his left foot raised to deliver another kick, almost lost his balance. As she looked into the flushed little face, streaked and stained with angry tears, as she saw the look of childish temper give place to startled wonderment and fear, Evelyn felt her purpose curiously weaken, and the instrument of punishment slipped impotently from her grasp. In a flash of clairvoyance she seemed to foresee that just such a look of wondering distress would creep over the boy's face tomorrow when it dawned upon his childish understanding that his mother had gone away and left him. A premonition that the time would come when the memory of any harshness this last night would add heavily to the burden she must carry made her voice oddly gentle, as she suddenly sank down beside the disconsolate and still defiant little figure.

"Anson," she said, with simple, direct appeal, "mama is very tired and nervous tonight. You don't want to make her headache worse, do you? Can't you help a little by going quietly upstairs and letting nurse make you tidy for dinner?" She could not have explained what impulse made her appeal to the child's reason. To her surprise, the sullen lines of his mouth relaxed; he lost the dogged, unchildish look, the look that always suggested a grotesque counterfeit of Jacob. His eyes met hers steadily for a moment, with a grave, comprehending gaze; then, "I didn't know you had a headache, mama," he said soberly, and without another word he proceeded up the stairs, stepping carefully on the tiptoes of his muddy little shoes.

With a queer, new feeling, to which she did not try to give a name, Mrs. Guthrie stood and watched her six-year-old son disappear around the curve of the banisters before closing and rebolting her door. He had given her a

curious surprise; she had not supposed that he was so amenable to reason; she had never troubled herself before to appeal to his sympathy. If she had discovered a little sooner this side of her child's nature, she might not have disliked him so much; she might have felt more compunction about leaving him. But even as her mood toward him began to soften, an outcry from the nursery above announced that hostilities had broken out afresh; his newborn sympathy for his mother's headache was already forgotten in the renewal of the feud with his nurse.

"Shall Mrs. Guthrie have on this dress tonight?" asked Hilda dubiously, her whole manner expressing disapproval of the plain black walking-suit in which Evelyn had planned to slip away, later in the evening.

"Yes, Hilda, yes. It is the warmest thing I have, and it comes up high in the neck. I have been chilly all day." It was odious to be forced to defend her acts to her own servants. Yet her last words, at least, were true enough; her bare shoulders shook with a nervous chill as she spoke.

"But Mrs. Guthrie is so pale tonight. She shall look better in the green velour. It is just so warm as the black dress," Hilda ventured with timid persistence. Evelyn eyed her keenly, with sudden suspicion. Had the girl any covert purpose behind her innocent words? Had she guessed that the green velour was already on its way to the Grand Central Station?

"Or the lace dress with the red waist?" Hilda urged persuasively. "Mr. Guthrie, he enjoys to see Mrs. Guthrie in bright colors!" Evelyn drew a sigh of relief; the maid's motive became at once so transparent. Jacob's primitive love of crude color was known to the whole household; also the unpleasant frankness with which he overruled her quieter taste. Well, what did it matter? Hilda's advice was wise. It would be a needless blunder tonight to attract Jacob's attention by any oddity of dress. There would be ample time after dinner to change once more.

"Very well, Hilda, but be quick

about it," for she heard the familiar slam of the front-door, heard the ponderous tread upon the stair, the insistent squeak of heavy shoes as they drew near, the squeak which by some fatality always lodged in Jacob's footwear, and which at times seemed to rasp her very soul.

A heavy hand descended upon the knob, exactly as the boy's had done earlier, without the formality of a knock. "Let me in, Evvy! Hurry up about it; I want to talk to you." She glanced at her bare shoulders in the mirror. Somehow, since she had solved her problem, since the moment she despatched the note that committed her to Barton, she felt that she had definitely shut Jacob out of her life. The idea of Jacob here now, in the intimacy of her dressing-room, suddenly seemed an impropriety, an unwarrantable intrusion. Her whole being revolted against admitting him.

"You can't come in now, Jacob. I will be down directly. I am dressing for dinner."

"Well, what has that to do with it? I am not stopping you, am I? Let me in, I tell you!"

"And I have told you once that you can't come in," she flung back at him in a flare of resentment; yet her fingers were trembling as she hooked her waist-belt. What would he say or do next? she wondered. The whole scene was almost ludicrously like that earlier one with her small son. Would Jacob also vent his wrath upon the door in angry kicks? But as she awaited the gathering storm a shrill young voice dictated from the floor above: "Go 'way, papa, an' let mama 'lone! You're makin' her headache worse, just like I did!"

"Oh, got a headache, have you? Why the deuce couldn't you say so?" came in a subdued growl from behind the door. Then, after a pause, the heavy shoes squeaked themselves reluctantly down the stairs.

Whatever her husband had been in such haste to tell her he seemed to have forgotten, when she presently descended to the dining-room. She felt

him eying her keenly from under his heavy brows, but the dinner dragged along in unusual silence, and Anson's turbulent entrance as the soup was being removed came almost as a relief. But the next moment her glance fell upon the child's mud-spattered shoes. Sharply she ordered him to go upstairs and change them.

"Master Anson wouldn't let me change them," volunteered the nurse from the doorway. "He has been tramping up and down in the gutters the whole afternoon, just to get them wet," she added wearily; "indeed, it is the hard day I have had with Master Anson."

"Well, he has no dinner till his shoes are changed," began Evelyn angrily, but her husband as usual overruled her.

"Hold on, Evvy, give the boy a chance to explain. He has some good reason, I'll be bound. Why wouldn't you change your shoes, Anson?"

"'Cause they squeak when they are muddy," answered the boy triumphantly. "Listen to them, mama, they squeak 'most as loud as papa's do! Mayn't I keep them on, papa? Say, mayn't I keep them on?"

For a moment Evelyn was prompted to protest. The child would surely catch cold, his little feet must be chilled through, his stockings soaking. But she checked herself, because in Jacob's amused consent she read a deliberate intention to annoy her, and she would not give him the satisfaction of thinking that she cared. And after all, why should she care? Why should she borrow trouble on this, the last night that she would ever be forced to sit at the table with them? The boy would have to get along in the future without a mother to guard him from the dangers of wet feet. And yet the folly of those damp shoes worried her in spite of herself, and all the more because both father and son seemed to look upon them as a huge joke, an added bond of fellowship. She found herself watching the child intently, fancying that he was flushed and hoarse, vaguely troubled because he coughed several times. If only he had been a little less

of a Guthrie, not quite such a living image of Jacob! But they were absurdly alike, those two—the same thick neck, the same big ears, the same bulldog tenacity about the firm square chin. No, she told herself angrily, she could never have learned to love the boy. Every year she would simply have given him a larger share of the aversion she felt for the father. Poor child, it was better to leave him while she still felt some compunction, some reluctance, some half-formed wish that fate had been kinder to them both. But as for Jacob! oh, the relief of knowing that she would be spared the daily petty irritation of his voice, his manners, the very clothes he wore! that she would never again have to sit opposite him at table and watch him busily and audibly bolt his food! never again have her teeth set on edge by the inevitable squeak of his big, broad-toed shoes—the squeak that little Anson was already trying to emulate!

Dinner was scarcely ended when Jacob, glancing at his watch, rose hastily, leaving his coffee untouched. He had been strangely quiet tonight; with all her preoccupation, she had noticed that. He had eaten next to nothing, even less than she herself; he had scarcely spoken, except to joke in a spasmodic, abstracted way with Anson about his squeaky shoes. He had evidently reconsidered the matter, whatever it was, that he had been in such haste to talk over while she was dressing. Well, at least it spared her the strain of listening and making answers. Even now he merely flung at her the bare fact that he must see a man on business and might not be home until quite late. Well, that was the way she would have chosen to have him pass out of her life—without the farce of a handclasp or a spoken farewell, and with the familiar word, "business," upon his lips—it was so ironically symbolic of their whole union.

As the time approached for her departure the minutes which all day long had lagged with maddening slowness seemed suddenly to sweep her onward

with a reckless, breathless rush. Little Anson she kissed good night, with an unwonted tenderness, a vague, tremulous remorse. After all, it was a cruel thing that she was doing. The boy had an unguessed side to his nature, revealed suddenly today in his unexpected sympathy for her headache. It hurt her oddly to think that he would learn to scorn her memory, that he would never understand how she had been goaded to this step, never know all the struggles and inward revolts through which she had passed. Nine o'clock came, almost before she knew. Half-past nine; she must be starting. She had told Barton to meet her by the flower-stand, between ten and ten-thirty. As she passed noiselessly down the stairs she thought to herself how absurdly easy it was, after all, to wreck one's life. Here she was, leaving husband and home, and going forth deliberately to dishonor, and yet it was as simple a matter to open the front-door and pass out as though she were going to church or to the theatre.

But half-way down the stairs a sound from the floor above suddenly startled her; a hoarse, choking cough followed by the half-frightened cry of a child just awakening to a consciousness of pain. It was years since Evelyn had heard that ominous, strangling cough, yet the unforgotten dread of it sent her whole heart up into her throat as she strained her ears to listen. She had been not quite twelve when her younger sister died of croup, yet for months afterward the sound of the labored breathing, the pitiful, choking voice haunted her waking hours and roused her many a night from her sleep. The hideous menace of it now came back upon her in one tempestuous rush. Impulsively she turned and raced up the stairs, almost to the door of the nursery, forgetful of herself, of Barton, of everything save her newly awakened anxiety. But at the head of the stairs she checked her headlong impulse. All was quiet now in the room. She could hear the nurse moving softly about, could hear the reassuring sound of the nurse's voice, soothing the child. An-

gry with herself, Mrs. Guthrie stood there a moment, irresolutely, then slowly descended again to the lower hall. How foolish, how sentimental of her to conjure up a melodrama on this particular night! Anson had never had a day of serious sickness in his life; from his birth he had always been a healthy little animal, as his father had been before him. Besides, her place was no longer here; had she not committed herself? What could she say to Barton if she failed to go? She might be false to Jacob but she would not, could not be false to both. Resolutely she turned the knob and opened the front-door. Then, although as if to bid her stay, there came once more from above stairs the same hoarse, strangling cough, she put her hands over both ears and fled out into the night.

Half-way down the block toward Madison avenue she hailed a passing hansom, flung the words, "Grand Central!" to the driver, and shivered back against the cushions, behind the shelter of the close-shut glass. The air without was full of a fine, powdery snow, which had clung to her wraps and, melting quickly in the stuffy warmth of the hansom, diffused an odor of wet furs. Through the panes, blurring quickly from the moisture, the street lamps shone dim and indistinct, suggesting morbid thoughts of night lamps in a sick-room. She rubbed away the mist and peered out. It seemed as though they had been driving for hours, and they had not yet reached Fiftieth street. She saw a physician's sign in a window, then another and another, one with a fiery red electric bulb marking the night bell. It seemed to her as though every house she passed contained a doctor's office. Desperately she tried to put aside gloomy thoughts. She was free, she told herself; this was the culminating moment for which she had been waiting. She would think of nothing but Barton and happiness and liberty, Barton and Sicily and sunshine. But all the while, above the muffled rumble of the wheels, above the dull murmur

of the city streets, there came to her ears with pitiless distinctness the echo of that menacing cough, that piteous, startled cry.

As she paid the driver and hurried through the jostling crowd, to enter one of the score of narrow doors that led to the main waiting-room, Mrs. Guthrie had a vague, numb consciousness that she had no volition of her own, that for the time being she was an automaton, the sport of destiny, powerless to resist, able only to suffer. If her will were awake, if she were not moving in a sort of hypnotic dream, she would even now be driving back to the home she had just left—she would have turned back before she had come half-way. But since she was only an automaton, an automaton with quivering nerves, she must abide by her choice, she must wait for Barton, loyal, patient Barton, who loved and trusted her.

The big clock at the east end of the great white room pointed to half-past ten. Their train would leave at eleven, yet Barton had not arrived. The benches near the flower-stand were crowded. Evelyn, perforce, stood up, near the public telephone desk, jostled by the ceaseless flow of passengers. She vaguely wondered where such multitudes of human beings could be going at this hour of night, how many of them were following the beaten track of daily routine, how many, like herself, were taking the crucial step down a precipitous path. A long train of emigrants, Syrians or Armenians, filed past her under the guidance of an interpreter, reaching her consciousness at first only as a blur of gaudy color, reds and blues and flaunting yellows. Then, quite mechanically, she began to notice them as individuals—gaunt, care-worn men; weary, toil-bent women; sleepy-eyed children, with thin, sunken cheeks, one or two with obstinate, hacking coughs—but everyone with a mother's arms to shelter it.

Mrs. Guthrie turned away, her face quivering with an almost physical pain. Oh, if she could only stop the echo of that other cough that rang

ceaselessly in her ears! She felt as though she must shriek aloud to drown out the insistent, haunting memory of it! She clenched her hands till her nails cut through the thin, damp kid of her gloves. She knew her own heart now, suddenly, when it was too late. She had thought, all these years, that the instinct of motherhood was not in her. She had told herself a hundred times, with arrogant satisfaction, that she was not like other women, that she lacked the faculty to care for children. And now, when she had flung away her chance, the dormant mother love had awakened, imperious, relentless, hounding her with impotent fears, mocking her helplessness. A fierce anger against Barton suddenly surged up in her, for leaving her to struggle alone so long with conscience. If Barton had been here, perhaps she might have forgotten her fears and silenced the accusing inward voice.

But Barton was strangely, inexplicably late. The clock hands crept steadily, inexorably along their circular path. The mighty drone of the megaphone rising above the hum of voices and the tramp of feet announced the eleven o'clock train, their train, the train that she had named in her note to Barton. Well, it made no difference; there was another at twelve. And yet the fact that the train had gone and Barton was not yet there suddenly flashed through her a merciful sense of a respite, a reprieve, an unexpected release from her promise. With tremulous eagerness she sprang forward to the telephone desk. She felt that she should go mad if she did not know what was happening in that back room on the third floor of the home she had left—was it only an hour, or was it an eternity ago?

"Booth No. 3," said the operator finally, after she had suffered a hideous anxiety over the unusual delay. Her fingers shook so violently that she could hardly hold the receiver.

"Is that the Guthries? Is Hilda there? I say, is Hilda there? Oh, you are Hilda? Well, this is Mrs. Guth-

rie. Yes, yes, Mrs. Guthrie. Oh, never mind where I am! Tell me, Hilda, is Anson all right? Can't you understand? Is—Anson—all—right? What's that? Speak more slowly! I say—speak—more slowly. I don't catch a word you say. . . . Yes, yes, I heard *that!* Oh, I knew it! I knew it! Sick and crying for me? Go on, Hilda, *go on!*" At last, through the nervous incoherence of Hilda's Swedish English she elicited the facts. Anson's symptoms had become alarming very soon after she had left the house. Consternation had reigned when it was discovered she was missing. For an hour they had been telephoning wildly in all directions for her and for Jacob. The nurse had been afraid the child would not live until the doctor could get there. But he had just come; he was upstairs now. Mrs. Guthrie moaned softly to herself as she listened. Then suddenly the calmness of definite purpose came over her.

"Hilda, I am on my way home, do you understand? Yes, on my way home. I shall be there in fifteen minutes." She felt no surprise at herself. It seemed as though she had known all the time that this was the one inevitable end, that she should go back! With a clatter she jammed the receiver back upon its hook and blindly, almost running, left the booth. The telephone boy followed her half-way down the station to remind her that she had forgotten to pay for the call. As she rushed out of the Forty-second street entrance she met Jacob face to face. It was probably the first time in her life that she had ever been glad to see him. It did not occur to her for the moment to wonder what had brought him there.

"Where are you going, Evvy?" The question was natural enough, apart from the queeriness of his tone. It filled her with a sudden, desperate fear. How much did Jacob know? Would he deny her the right to go back to the child that was hers as much as his, the child that was calling for her?

"Home, Jacob—take me home the quickest way you can! For Anson's

sake, Jacob, not for mine! You haven't heard from the house, Jacob? You don't know about Anson?"

He barred her way and stood looking down at her with eyes in which incredulity slowly gave place to fear. "What has Anson to do with it?" he asked. His deliberation maddened her.

"Don't stand there asking me what Anson has to do with it! He is sick, Jacob; he may be dying while we waste time talking! I just had Hilda on the 'phone. He caught cold with those wet shoes. You have a right to hate me; it was all my fault; I wasn't thinking of him as I ought!"

"I guess we weren't either of us thinking much about him tonight, poor little chap," answered Jacob grimly. The next moment he was thrusting her, with brusque tenderness, into a carriage. "Drive like hell!" she heard him bid the coachman.

For several blocks the silence was broken only by the crack of a whip, the muffled thud of hoofs on the snow-coated asphalt. Through Evelyn's brain the ghastly nightmare scene of the sick-room passed again and again, piteously, insistently, with panoramic clearness. Again and again she heard the strangling cough, the piteous gasping of the little lungs, fighting for breath; then watched the rigid limbs relax, the final change creep over the drawn, suffering little face. In desperation she turned and spoke to Jacob. His worst scorn would be better than her own thoughts.

"How did you happen to come to the Grand Central?"

"I came to meet you," he answered colorlessly.

"Then you knew I was going away tonight?"

"I knew that you thought you were."

"You mean you would have prevented me?"

"I mean nothing of the kind. I thought you might want to change your mind. You ought to know me better than that, Evvy. I wouldn't keep any woman against her will, not even you. Nothing prevented you

from going. You may go now, if you want to."

"Tell me how you knew," she asked in a mere thread of a voice.

"I suppose you would call it dishonorable, by your standards; I read a letter that didn't belong to me."

"Don't talk to me about dishonor," she flashed back at him in her anguish, "with Anson lying at home sick, dying perhaps, through my neglect. Don't talk to me about my standards, Jacob! What letter do you mean?"

"Listen. When I came home today I found my mail as usual in the library. Among the others was a letter from Fenway. I opened it before I saw that it was addressed to you. Then—well, then I read it right through. It seemed to be an answer to one from you. I went upstairs to ask you about it. But I changed my mind on Anson's account. Instead I called up Fenway and told him I must see him tonight on a little business matter. He was pretty well scared when I went up to his rooms."

"You didn't—you didn't quarrel with him, Jacob?" For a moment she had an absurd fear of some brutal tragedy, a vision of two angry men grappling each other in savage jealousy.

"Quarrel? No, what for? That would be a poor way to do business. He had his scare for nothing. I told him we were opening a branch office in Rio, and had been looking around for the right man to run it. It occurred to me that he was the very man for the place, and that Rio was just the place for him. I named a good, big salary—oh, no more than the position is worth—and asked him if he would take it."

"And what did he say, Jacob?" But she knew already what was coming; her old ideas and illusions all seemed to be crumbling to pieces tonight.

"Oh, he hesitated; said I had taken

him by surprise, that he was half-committed already to another offer. He asked me to leave it open till tomorrow; said he would see the other party to-night and let me know whether he could get out of it. I said, if by the other party he meant you, that didn't make any difference, because if you didn't go with him, he would have no reason to hesitate; and if you did go, he would have twice the reason for needing the salary. You may not know it, Evvy, but his income isn't big enough for two; it hardly pays for his cigars. Well, he hasn't accepted the Rio place, but I think he will. Anyhow, he left it for me to meet you and explain."

The carriage stopped before their house just as Jacob ended his story. Hilda, with joyous face, opened the door. "And did Mrs. Guthrie meet the doctor. He is yust gone. Master Anson, he is better, oh, very much better. He will be quite well now, the doctor was saying." The mother and father stole into the room together, where Anson lay, sleeping the restorative sleep of exhaustion. As her eyes turned from the unconscious child to the rugged, honest man beside her, Evelyn for the first time admitted that she ought to be glad the boy had more of his father in him than of her.

"I don't know what to say, Jacob," she murmured in new humility. "I wonder that you don't send me away. I can't even pretend that I came back for your sake."

"Don't I know that?" he answered her with rough sincerity. "I don't want you to pretend. But you did come back for the boy's sake. I shall never forget that. And that's a good enough foundation to begin over again on." And as she looked on the face of the sleeping boy she felt that Jacob was right. The mother instinct was a pretty safe foundation.



THE BLIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE

By Johnson Morton

The canker galls the infants of the Spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

HAMLET.

EFFIE was listening while the three women were talking. She sat on a hassock in the fading light of the west window with a book on her knees. Sometimes, as Aunt Esther's eyes wandered in her direction through their heavy, round glasses, she would turn a page quickly, with a strange little realization of her own slyness. She was naturally an honest child, but years of repression among old women had made her quick to seize every chance for amusement and ready to conceal her interest. One of her chief pleasures was to listen to the talk of her elders—talk which, although it might start with the *topics* that her grandmother had early pointed out were the only proper themes of polite conversation, very soon ran into novel and delightful personalities, promising intelligences, alas, too seldom realized, because her absorbed attention usually made itself noticed and she was sent summarily from the room. Today Effie resolved to hold herself strictly to account, for already Aunt Martha's shrill voice had raised itself to a pitch of excitement and Grandmother's hands had dropped the knitting which they usually held. Besides, they were speaking of Miss Isabel Morris and Dr. Barrett and their engagement. Miss Isabel was her friend, her very particular friend. She loved her so dearly that it seemed almost a *duty* to listen!

She turned another page noisily to

avoid a possible glance of Aunt Esther's sharp eyes. Aunt Martha was speaking.

"It's all right from your point of view, Augusta," she was looking at Grandmother, "but I don't let him off so easily."

"Nor I," chimed in Aunt Esther.

Grandmother smiled. She was less aggressive than her sisters, and because of her two years' experience of marriage—she had been left a widow at twenty-eight—was supposed, in the strange, three-cornered family discussions, to be the champion of man. Effie wondered vaguely why the other two always seemed to combine against her. It couldn't be really fair, for Grandmother was a tiny little woman. She reached only a trifle above Effie's nine-year-old head and seemed as small as a child in the presence of her tall sisters. Aunt Martha went on.

"It seems to me that, even if he doesn't care for her as much, as is plain, as *she* cares for *him*, he ought not to let it be so very apparent."

"Men are always like that," interrupted Aunt Esther sententiously.

"Yes," agreed Aunt Martha, "selfish to the core."

This time Grandmother laughed aloud, and the eye-glasses which she wore as a sort of protest to the gold-bowed spectacles of her sisters, fell from her nose.

"Girls," she began—Effie was listening intently—"you are all wrong, but you can't be supposed to know about such things! In a case like this a man has nothing whatever to do but behave like a gentleman, and I don't want anyone to tell me that Thomas Barrett's

son isn't doing that. No human man can treat a woman he doesn't love as he treats one that he does. It's a very unfortunate business, I know, but thank heaven, I am not biased in any way and I can put the blame where it belongs. Why, it's all Isabel's fault, every bit of it." She paused, re-adjusted her glasses and gave some gentle dabs at her face with her fine pocket-handkerchief. "No woman on earth has any right to show any man that she cares for him until he asks her."

Effie looked up suddenly. This was something dreadful that Grandmother was saying. Her book fell to the floor. The noise attracted the attention of everyone.

"My dear child," cried absent-minded Aunt Martha, "have you been sitting there all this time reading in this poor light?" She glanced at the clock. "Why, it's ten minutes past your bedtime already, and my night to go with you to your chamber, too. Come, kiss Grandmother and Aunt Esther."

Effie obeyed automatically. Aunt Martha put an arm firmly about the child's thin shoulder and led her away. Aunt Esther pushed the hassock back into its place beneath the pier-glass.

"I wonder how much of what we said that child heard and what she made of it. It was careless of us, Augusta."

Grandmother shook her head. "She heard all, I'm afraid, but at nine one doesn't make much of the emotions. It won't hurt her to remember those last words of mine, anyway," she added stanchly. "They may stand her in good stead some day."

Aunt Esther did not join in her laugh. "I'm not so sure of that," she said.

After Aunt Martha had heard Effie say her prayers, and had tucked her in with one blanket neatly folded back at her feet to draw up in case it grew cold during the night, she put the lamp in the hallway on a chair so that its light could shine in gently through the half-opened door. Then she went downstairs on tiptoe so as not to break the immediate sleep of tired childhood in which she believed

implicitly. A moment later the little girl sprang lightly out of bed and hurried to the window.

It was not more than half-past eight and the last of the Summer twilight still clung over the elm-lined village street. A soft wind ran through the branches; here and there one sleepy bird called to another, and below foot-steps crackled mysteriously on the gravel walk. It was a habit of Effie's to sit by the window in Summer after she was supposed to be in bed. "Watching the night come," she called it, and once she had fallen asleep there and the night had come and gone and when she opened her eyes again she had seen the east all red and gold and out of it had come the sun. She ran back to bed, guilty, and yet happy with the consciousness of a secret that she and nature shared, as she pulled the blankets over her cold little body.

Tonight was different—somehow nothing outside seemed to interest her. Those were just trees and birds and houses and that was old Mr. Battle walking by—he never lifted his feet and she could tell his step as far off as she heard it. She didn't care even for her own particular star that gleamed pale and cool above the church-spire. There was something inside of her that kept going around and around—something that she couldn't explain and that frightened and fascinated her at the same time. They had talked about love downstairs. She knew all about love—she loved everybody—Grandmother, the aunts, Beezie Warlock in the kitchen, the Sumner girls who played with her in the garden and her dear young father and mother in heaven, though she could not imagine even how they looked. They had been drowned in the wreck of a steamer and she had been rescued. She was a little baby, then; it was ever so long ago. She *really* remembered nothing but just living with Grandmother and the aunts. She loved them most of all—oh, and God—of course, she loved God—everybody did—and Miss Isabel. There; that was what troubled her!

"You must not tell anyone that you

love them until they tell you," Grandmother had said. And she *had* told Miss Isabel! A hot blush came to her thin little cheek. Was that wrong? Why, Miss Isabel had done it, too! She had told Dr. Barrett, and he was a man. Oh, that is what is wrong! You must not tell it to a man! Effie felt relieved. Somehow Dr. Barrett did not love Miss Isabel as much as she loved him. That was it—"selfish to the core." It was terrible, and yet—"I don't see as it matters if Miss Isabel loves him," she thought. "I don't see what your loving has to do with your having somebody love you! Grandmother must be wrong." But, try as she would, Effie couldn't find any instance in which Grandmother had been wrong in the past. She was tiresomely right. "I'll remember that," she decided. "There; it was like this." She fitted the phrases together. "I must remember it all my life. It's funny how I can say Grandmother's almost very words. 'No woman must show any man that she loves him till he asks her.' Well, they always do ask you—in books."

She flung the thought easily back into her mind and leaned farther out of the window. By stretching past the honeysuckle you could see the porch of Miss Isabel's house across the way. There were people sitting there. She could hear voices indistinctly. She listened. Yes, that was Miss Isabel! She'd know her laugh, such a pretty laugh, anywhere. Effie tried to copy it discreetly behind the curtain.

Hark! Wasn't that the coach coming round by the Town Hall? Effie had forgotten about it because she had had so many things to think of. It was dreadfully late tonight. It came from the station, twelve miles off, and brought the people from Boston. Once she had ridden on it. That was a wonderful thing to do. You sat next to Alfred Pine and he drove six horses with one hand and held the other arm around you. The coach came nearer; it gave quite an air of gaiety to the street. If they only had a *band*—she had heard one at the State fair—it

made you think very strange things. There was just one man on top as the coach rattled by the lamp in front of the church. It stopped at Miss Isabel's house. Effie hung farther out of the window. The man got off—it was Dr. Barrett. There was the thud of a bag on the piazza, then a voice, Miss Isabel's—such a beautiful voice.

"Roger, Roger, how glad I am, Roger!"

The heart of the little listener thrilled. Then a deeper voice answered; its tone was impatient. "Yes; it's I, Isabel. I haven't had any supper. Look out, don't come too near, I'm covered with dust!"

Effie heard. Somehow everything seemed, of a sudden, cold. She crept back to bed and, for the first time in her life, lay awake far into the night with strange, vague, troubled thoughts.

The wedding was just two weeks later. They had stretched a carpet from the side-door of Miss Isabel's house to the side-door of the church. To do this they had to take down part of the church fence, but Effie explained this by the fact that Miss Isabel's father was the minister and much latitude was allowed to ministers. They were next to God, you know. The chancel was decorated with daisies; she had picked hundreds of them herself. There were six bridesmaids, all beautiful in white, two with pink sashes and two with blue and two with green. Effie had been asked to be a flower-girl, but she had no chance to imagine herself as one, for Grandmother and the aunts vetoed the plan at once. So it was really no disappointment, especially as she had a new dress to wear, white and shimmering, and new shoes and blue silk stockings, with a blue ribbon in her hair. It was the first marriage service that Effie had ever seen and she was impressed by many things: the subdued light stealing in over the gay party at the chancel; Mr. Morris's tall, black figure; his earnest words, and the haunting note of the organ that seemed to linger over the place after the bride had gone out. How beautiful Miss Isabel was—she

was Mrs. Isabel, now—and Dr. Barrett was handsome, too. What yellow hair he had, and how straight and slender he looked in his smooth, black coat!

At the reception, afterward, Effie stood a while by the bride's side, and some of the people spoke to her and shook her hand and congratulated her. She felt quite a part of it all and held her head high. Then she would dart into the kitchen where the minister's black Lottie and Nannie, who lived at Dr. Parish's, and her own Beezie, borrowed for the occasion, were filling great dishes with chicken salad and ice-cream. In the middle of the table stood a splendid cake; Beezie showed it to her.

"It's the bride cake," she said, and added in an encouraging whisper, "I think you'll get a piece of it by-and-bye."

Upstairs in the spare room, which had the bed taken out for the occasion, were the wedding presents. Effie had seen them many times, but she never tired of them. When no one was looking she would go to a corner of the mantelpiece where her own gift lay in a white box. It was a pair of garters—beautiful blue garters trimmed with silver. She had read somewhere that a bride must always have garters among her gifts. At first Grandmother had laughed and the aunts had frowned. Indeed, Aunt Martha had called it an *indelicate idea*, but Effie had asked Miss Isabel about it, even if it did take away a little from the "surprise" part, and Miss Isabel had blushed and laughed, too—only in a very different way, and had kissed her and said, "You darling!" So the garters were bought; Grandmother sent to Boston for them and they cost four dollars!

When she came downstairs again the hall was empty and there was a great noise of talking in the dining-room. Miss Isabel, who was standing at the table, saw her and called out: "O Effie, you are just in time. I was saving this for you." She held out a piece of cake on a little plate. "You must look in it before you eat it, dear, and see if you find anything."

Effie broke it in pieces carefully. Why, there was something hard there! Miss Isabel turned to the fair-haired bridesmaids.

"Girls, she's got the ring. That means you'll be married next," she laughed. "You must put it on, dear." The bridesmaids crowded about Effie. She knew that she ought to feel happy, but somehow she didn't. Those same queer thoughts that she had that night came back to her. They spoiled it all.

"Oh, thank you, Miss Isabel," she stammered as the ring hung loose on her claw of a finger, "but I shall never marry. I never mean to tell anyone that I love him——"

Miss Isabel looked puzzled. "What a queer child you are!" she said, as she bent to kiss the upturned face. "Now run along and wait for me at the foot of the stairs. I'm going to change my dress."

It seemed hours before she came down again. The carriage stood at the door, its wheels decked with white ribbons. There was a big bunch of daisies on the trunk behind. The bridesmaids hung over the banisters and talked with flushed young ushers who handed them rice. Effie had some, too, in her warm little fist. Grandmother and the aunts would not have approved; but they could not see, for they were sitting in a group of black silks and white lace caps in the parlor beyond. From where she stood, the child watched the door of Miss Isabel's room. It opened. The bride stepped out all in gray, with the dearest hat. She clung a moment to her mother's arms; then her father held her close. Dr. Barrett came down the hall, and together they descended the stairs. Behind them stood the father and mother, hand in hand and smiling through their tears. Before them, youth and laughter and gaiety. The air was full of rice and roses. They gained the door, the carriage. Effie's little blue legs bore her ahead of all. She would be the very last to see them. Miss Isabel turned at the carriage step

to wave her hand. Dr. Barrett hurried her in. "Don't wait," he said—his tone seemed cruel to the listening child—"I hate all this tomfoolery."

For Effie the day had died. She begged to go to bed right after an

untasted supper. "Too much excitement," said Aunt Martha.

"Too much ice-cream," laughed Grandmother.

"Too much emotion," thought Aunt Esther, staring through her round glasses.



BALLADE OF A LOST ATLANTIS

By Ernest McGaffey

UNDER the foam of the sad gray seas
 The lost Atlantis of Plato dreams,
 Never to bask in the wave-worn breeze,
 Never to flash in the tiding gleams,
 And under the current of Life's vague streams
 As dim as the shadow of mortal ruth,
 Is a mocking wraith that somehow seems
 The lost Atlantis that men call youth.

Under the ebb of the sharp salt brine
 The lost Atlantis of Plato broods,
 Never to hunger for shade or shine
 Never to sway with the season's moods,
 And always through changing interludes
 However we laugh or weep, forsooth,
 This ghost of the long-dead years intrudes;
 The lost Atlantis that men call youth.

Under the throb of the pulsing deep
 The lost Atlantis of Plato dies,
 Never to wake from its marbled sleep
 Never to challenge the far blue skies,
 Not from the folding sands to rise
 Or feel the gnawing of Time's dull tooth,
 And under each past like a vision lies
 The lost Atlantis that men call youth.

L'ENVOI

Prince! whether the memory waits or flies
 I know it still for the bitter truth;
 I see it fade, with unflinching eyes,
 The lost Atlantis that men call youth.

LE JUGEMENT

Par Leo Larguier

DEPUIS longtemps nul différence s'élevant entre aucun des habitants de Saint-Aube-les-Pins, la salle de la justice de paix était dans un piteux état. La table du juge n'existait plus et devait servir au conseil municipal; le buste de la République, noir de poussière, présidait seul au mur contre lequel s'appuyaient les perches des retraits aux flambeaux, la lance d'un drapeau roulé, les verres empilés qui servent aux illuminations du 14 juillet et un feu d'artifice que l'on avait oublié de tirer l'an passé et que l'on conservait là, soigneusement empaqueté.

Par un carreau cassé, le vent salubre, le vent pur de la Provence, entraînait et agitait les toiles d'araignées, semblables à d'épais petits linceuls pleins de cadavres de mouches.

Evidemment, le juge, M. Denis Combet, n'allait jamais là dedans; il lisait Virgile ou Mistral à l'ombre de ses arbres, faisait des vers fort goûtés aux banquets de félibres et, lorsqu'il n'était point en Avignon, s'occupait encore de ses abeilles dont les ruches creusées dans de vieux troncs avaient l'air d'un minuscule village nègre, au fond du jardin, derrière les bambous. L'air doux du pays ne prêtait pas aux humeurs sombres, les familles limitaient leurs désirs aux bornes de leur patrimoine, chacun connaissait son droit et son bien, et si les garçons buvaient un coup de trop les soirs de fête votive, ils réglaient leurs affaires eux-mêmes, entre les fûts odorants des pinèdes que la lune indifférente vaporisait.

Cependant, après une visite qu'il y fit, le juge s'émut du mauvais état de son

prétoire, plus semblable à un débarras qu'à une salle de tribunal.

On décida de faire venir les maçons, le menuisier, le vitrier, et le maire fit voter un crédit de cinquante francs par le conseil.

Un beau matin donc, le maçon chanta les *Strophes à Magali* dans la salle de justice.

Mais le hasard, qui dirige tout, amena une affaire à juger, le jour même où le prétoire était un marécage de plâtre, de chaux pétrie et de graviers.

Après un instant de réflexion, le juge convoqua simplement les deux plaignants chez lui, pour le lendemain, dimanche, à onze heures précises.

Il connaissait déjà par sa servante le différend qu'il devait trancher.

La Rosine, des Aubettes, avait reçu de Prosper Barbelan une bague, avant le départ de Prosper pour le régiment.

Le conscrit était revenu, son service achevé, et quelques mauvaises langues ayant accusé Rosine de choses que la belle fille n'était sans doute pas incapable de faire, il ne voulut plus d'elle et réclama sa bague, une bague de douze francs achetée chez l'horloger Mahistre, de la place de la Fontaine, au chef-lieu, un soir de foire.

Rosine ne voulut pas rendre l'anneau, et l'histoire venait devant le juge.

Donc, le dimanche matin, Prosper Barbelan arriva chez M. Combet, qui lisait à mi-voix une page de *Calendal* sous son cerisier.

Le garçon était endimanché, et, à cause de l'habitude, il s'intéressait au jardin, en attendant Rosine qui ne se pressait pas. Il donnait des conseils pour un arbre dévoré de pucerons, et le

juge bienveillant, ayant mis une feuille en guise de signet à son livre, devisait avec lui.

A onze heures et demie la Rosine arriva.

Elle était blonde et portait un corsage bleu pâle, un corsage rond et gonflé, dont les manches étroites moulaien ses bras robustes.

Sa jeune tête hâlée s'empourprait de la honte de cette démarche et du reflet vermeil de son ombrelle grenat. Elle n'avait qu'un ruban blanc dans ses beaux cheveux.

Le juge regarda Prosper et le vit pâlir. Alors il pensa que sa besogne serait facile, non point que cet excellent M. Denis Combet eût par expérience une grande science des choses de l'amour, mais il connaissait d'après les poètes, ses amis, les signes certains auxquels on distingue les troubles du cœur.

— Tu embellis tous les jours, Rosine, dit le juge en la saluant.

Puis il gratta sa joue où frisait une barbe grise d'ermite.

— Voyons, ça ne va donc pas, que vous ayez besoin de moi? Racontez-moi vos histoires, là, sous cet arbre chargé de cerises et qui sent bien meilleur que la salle de l'audience toujours moisie et froide... Voyons, y sommes-nous?

Aucun ne se décidait.

— Monsieur le juge, commença Rosine, monsieur le juge...

— Quoi, ma fille... interrogea le magistrat.

Mais Rosine se tut, rouge comme les dures cerises qui pendaient en bouquets au-dessus de sa tête.

Prosper faisait tourner son chapeau entre ses doigts.

M. Combet reprit:

— Je sais tout par Marinette. Il s'agit d'une bague, n'est-ce pas? D'une bague que Rosine ne veut pas rendre. Je puis l'y condamner sans doute, mais je veux savoir ce qu'en pense Prosper.

Et le juge regardait malicieusement le grand garçon, si près de Rosine, que la jupe blanche de la belle fille couvrait presque son soulier.

Ils avaient l'air de deux amoureux pris en faute, et la situation menaçait

de se prolonger, lorsque le juge de paix, apercevant sa gouvernante qui sortait de la maison, avec une nappe et un couvert, trouva subitement le moyen de tourner la loi et de frustrer le Code.

La servante vint, sans se gêner, mettre la nappe sur une table de pierre, à côté de son maître qui lui demanda:

— Qu'as-tu donc pour déjeuner, Marinon?

— Monsieur, dit la vieille, j'ai des olives, des confites, une omelette, un poulet, de la salade, et voici le dessert, acheva-t-elle en élevant la main vers les fruits rouges.

— C'est bien, triple l'omelette, ces enfants déjeuneront avec moi, nous ferons leur procès ensuite.

Et les laissant ahuris, il alla lui-même chercher deux chaises en osier et une bouteille à la cave... Lorsqu'il revint, ils étaient l'un en face de l'autre, confus, et semblant examiner l'herbe où couraient des faucheux et où fleurissaient des marguerites...

Ils s'attablèrent sous le cerisier.

Le soleil, tamisé par les branches, jetait sur la nappe des pièces d'or sans effigies qui remuaient avec les rameaux, au moindre souffle, et le juge avait à sa droite Rosine, et Prosper à sa gauche.

Ils avaient été un peu embarrassés au commencement du repas, mais après le rôti et le vieux châteauneuf des papes débouché, les deux jeunes gens, ayant sans doute oublié leur ancienne querelle, se contemplaient avec des yeux mouillés et comme s'ils s'étaient découverts.

Lorsque Rosine buvait en renversant un peu la tête, Prosper regardait à travers le cristal et l'or du vin ses petites dents saines et blanches, et il voyait, tout troublé, le cou ambré par le soleil et un mince trait luisant entre les paupières à demi fermées de la grande fille.

Le juge les servait, emplissant leur verre et leur assiette, heureux de s'en tirer ainsi.

D'une branche basse, une cerise tomba dans l'échancrure du corsage de Rosine qui poussa un petit cri et sortit de sa gorge le fruit luisant et déjà tiède; une abeille bourdonna dans le verre

vide de Prosper; mille incidents agrestes qui leur parurent charmants les occupèrent.

M. Denis Combel chargea Rosine de leur servir le dessert, et, souple, elle grimpa sur la chaise, les bras levés vers l'arbre.

Une pluie de cerises tomba.

Prosper regardait le beau corps jeune et tendu vers la ramure, le casque de cheveux ensoleillés, les seins ronds, les bras robustes, les longues jambes que dessinait l'étoffe de la jupe.

Marinette apporta le café et le juge tira sa pipe.

— Eh bien, mes amis, dit-il, si nous parlions un peu de notre procès...

Et, se tournant vers le jeune homme:

— Vraiment, tiens-tu tant que cela à cette bague?... Rosine, donne-moi ta main, celle où est cet anneau...

La blonde tendit sa main gauche, belle et fine, malgré les travaux des champs. La bague brillait à son doigt, éclair d'or qui portait une pierre bleuâtre.

— Ote-la-lui... dit le juge en regardant Prosper.

Le garçon prit les doigts de Rosine entre les cerises qui jonchaient la nappe, et les deux mains unies ressemblaient à ces naïfs emblèmes d'amitié qui ornent un coin de papier à lettres.

Le juge, n'ayant plus à se prononcer, rouvrit son livre marqué au milieu d'une feuille verte, et, tandis que les jeunes gens, prenant congé, s'en allaient en se donnant le bras, le vieux célibataire murmura quelques vers provençaux doux, bruissants et comme pleins d'abeilles.



A SONG IN AUTUMN

By Arthur Davison Ficke

BECAUSE the Winter dusk is near,
Soon coming, and abiding long,
In this one respite of the year,
O give me song!—

Here where the Autumn lingers slow,
And turning through its golden haze
Lovingly sees, ere it must go,
The Summer of its yesterdays.

Tomorrow's silence draweth near;
Tomorrow's dusk endureth long;
But now, amid the dreaming year,
O give me song!



NODD—Did your wife call you up over the 'phone?
TODD—No; down.

SONGS IN EXILE

By Arthur Stringer

I—WHISTLIN' DANNIE

FAITH, such a whistler was Dannie,
A-chirrupin' all the day!
'Twas more like a thrush on the whin-side
A-singin' its life away!

His thatch stood a sieve for the wather,
And his belly went empty av bread;
But he made his potheen out av Music,
And whistled his troubles to bed!

And divil a man did he care for,
And divil a woife would he take,
And divil a rag had he once to his name—
But och, what a tune he could make!

II—THE PHILANDERER

Och, never give your whole heart up—take it from one that knows!
The first may seem a lily, but the second's like a rose,
And kissin' still is kissin', lad, from Antrim down to Clare,
And the world is full av women—so the divil take the care!

Aye, kiss away their tears, me lad, and hold them at a song;
The heart that's lovin' lightest is the heart that's lovin' long!
So leave the gurl beyont the hill, and greet the one above—
Och, don't be lovin' women, lad, but just thry lovin' Lovel

III—EXILE

In the dead av the night, acushla,
When the new big house is still,
I think av the childer thick as hares
In the ould house under the hill!

And I think av the times, alanna,
That we harkened the peewit's cry,
And how we ran to the broken gate
When the piper av Doon went by!

In the dead of the year, acushla,
When me wide new fields are brown,
I think av that wee ould house,
At the edge av the ould gray town!

I think av the rush-lit faces,
 Where the room and loaf was small:
*Yet the new years seem the lean years,
 And the ould years, best av all!*

IV—SOFT WAYS

I

ALANNA, what a soft land the Ould Sod used to be;
 The soft lush green o' hillsides, the soft encirclin' sea;
 The still and purple moorlands, where the plovers call;
 The soft and misty bog-land, the loch and purrin' fall;
 The heather on the brake-side, the sleepy fields o' hay;
 The Fairy-Thorn and Whin-Bush, the gold Gorse and the May;
 The low wall and the roof thatch, so mild wid moss and mold;
 The soft cries av the childer, the soft eyes av the ould;
 And best and last, the Springtime, all muffled wid the rain:
But never once those soft ways for me and mine again!

II

This new land has no soft ways; 'tis moitherin' hard and stern;
 'Tis work and fret your way out, 'tis moilin' every turn!
 Alanna, all the soft things the throubled city sees
 Is laughin' gurls wid soft mouths still swarmin' thick as bees!
 And me that's used to ould ways, with nothin' else to find,
 I seek me out a soft mouth, and leave the rest behind;
 I seek the only soft thing their frettin' streets can hold—
For women in the New World are kind as in the Ould!

V—OULD DOCTOR MA'GINN

THE ould doctor had only wan failin',
 It stayed wid him, faith, till he died;
 And that was the habit av wearin'
 His darby a *thrifle* wan side!

And twenty times daily 'twas straightened,
 But try as he would for a year,
 Not thinkin', he'd give it a teether
 A *thrifle* down over wan ear!

It sat him lop-sided and aisy;
 It throubled his kith and his kin—
 But ach, 'twas the only thing crooked
 About our ould Doctor Ma'Ginn!

And now that he's gone to his Glory—
 Excuse me, a bit av a tear—
*Here's twenty to wan that his halo
 Is slantin' down over his ear!*

THE BETTER THINGS

By Vanderheyden Fyles

GERALD was not surprised that the reëtrance of Marion into his room seemed to cause a general readjustment of values; to compile, as it were, an unconscious inventory of the preciseworth of each detail of luxury and comfort in his apartment. It had always been so. It had never occurred to him to ask her direct judgment upon anything in his chambers; he could not recall, in all the years of their friendship, their ever having discussed specifically any of his pictures or his rugs, his large bronzes or his small jades, unless in the impersonal manner of some beautiful or interesting specimen that both had seen at some old gallery or palace in France or Italy, or in some new museum in their home-land. It would have been incompatible with the nature of either to undertake, to reduce to literal verballity, the mystery of the greater beauties; their appreciation of the better things was too profound to vulgarize itself by spoken admiration. The fact of being together in the presence of the beautiful had seemed to them the most reverently final, if, at the same time, a most elusive, expression of appreciation. Possibly this tacit understanding was unconscious; Gerald could not know to what degree his friend realized it. But he had been keenly conscious, many times, of Marion's effect upon inanimate objects. Her mere adjacency seemed to illumine the good with a more visible manifestation of its value, just as her silent presence seemed to draw unworthy objects into a sort of awkward, self-conscious glare of inferiority.

The soft light of the candles, which,

with a few rose-shaded lamps, were the sole illumination of the library and the study that opened from it, and of the dining-room beyond, threw a hazy glow on Marion as she stood in the doorway from the hall. The clinging folds of her mauve gown and of the filmy cloak that fell over it seemed to shade into the gray perspective of the hallway at her back; and the dull yellow of her hair appeared to be a mellowed shadow of the candle glow that fell upon it. She lifted a long, slender arm, from which the draperies fell in sweeping folds, and gave her hand to Gerald.

"I've come early after all, you see," she said, in a voice that was as soft and vague as the shadows that filled the room, and whose mellow cadences seemed to come from some such far-away as the old embroideries between which she stood or the ancient altar chair from which the young man had arisen. "It would have been so easy to have evaded this talk that, of course, I couldn't."

"I wanted you to come before the rest," he said. "It has been so long——"

"So very, very long," she murmured, moving slowly into the room. "I wonder if it's been too long. The room here seems almost strange; and, of course, that isn't right. I mean the strangeness of surroundings that one knew so well that one never thought to consider how they really looked, until returning after an absence. I realize for the first time the fact of this place's beauty; and that isn't right."

"Come," he said, "the old chair—and the Russians——" He led her to the great green arm-chair, and as she

sank into its familiar depths he arranged the pale green cushions at her back and handed her a tray of cigarettes.

"It's hardly more than seven-thirty now," he went on, as he seated himself in a more upright chair, across from her, and selected a cigarette from his own case for himself; "and the most impatient diner certainly won't show up before eight. I must hear many things, you know; it is a long time since you and I have been like this—old friend."

"Three months, is it—or three hundred years? I can't tell. I don't think days or months or anything like that can express time past when a new element has entered into the life of one friend or the other."

"Then it is true?" he half-asked and half-affirmed.

"Oh, yes," she answered, between long, languorous puffs of the scented cigarette. "And, do you know, I feel somehow cowardly about telling you of it. Of course there is no reason why I should feel so, but the hesitation makes me imagine that there must be; but there shall be no cowardice between us—that's a reason why I came so early, why I must talk to you in a furious flow."

"You've asked him to come tonight?" Gerald said. "I've kept a place, you know."

"Yes," she murmured, "he'll come tonight—at 'a little after eight.'" She smiled slightly and rather vaguely. "His casual phrase has burned into my mind all day; it's made everything glow. Isn't it absurd, Gerald? And isn't it wonderful?"

He gazed at her many minutes before he spoke; at the long, slender hands and graceful arms; at the white curve of the pliant throat; at the delicate features of the pale face; and at the mass of uncontrolled, dull, yellow hair. "The little Ice Maiden," he said, at last, slowly shaking his head from side to side, "the little Ice Maiden all aglow."

"Yes," she went on, "and the absurd thing is that I can see myself as though I were another person, impartially

looking on. At such times I laugh at all the thrilling tingles and great compelling sweeps; the wonderful vibrations that are the very life and soul of the flesh-and-blood Marion. It is very strange to be able to think in epigrams of the emotions that are one's most sacred self."

The hazy lights and shadows fell on the face of the Ice Maiden and threw its intense, almost weird expression into a supernatural relief. The look was not wholly new to Gerald. He had seen its counterpart before in the same surroundings; once when she had made him feel the mists and vague distances of a Corot he had missed seeing, and another time when she had made him understand, without lifting her voice from its conversational cadences, the insidious melody of a Charpentier opera which he had not yet heard.

"I wonder what you will think of him," she said, "and what you think of me. And I wonder how much I care what you think. Of course, you are the only person for whose thoughts about it I care at all; the only one whose opinion could be vital to me. That vast world of uncomprehending others naturally doesn't matter."

The man and the woman smoked in silence for a little time. When she spoke again she seemed rather to be repeating what both had been thinking than to be resuming a conversation. She had thrown her cigarette aside and was leaning forward, her elbows on her knees and her chin resting in her hands.

"That much I understand," she said; "the values of our little world are clear to me; the absurd inconsequentiality of its aims and standards—and the infinite worth of the better things, and of the seeing them and joying in them with a person like yourself. But now another element has entered in—and everything is confused. I love him, Gerald. And this coming of love has distorted everything, has thrown a mist over the clearness of my view. Do you know, I never read a word during all those three months in the mountains? I never recalled a verse

or brought to mind a single one of those lines of poignant meaning that had become an unconscious part of my existence. And I didn't realize the change. I hardly seemed to think. I was with him; that was all-sufficient. Day after day we tramped into the thickest of the forest, a gun across his shoulder and a game-bag over mine; or we paddled far in our canoe, he carrying the light craft above his head from one lake to the next. I breathed deep of the cold, crisp air, and I gloried in the primitive vitality of the world; but I never thought. I knew that he was near me, and that each day would be followed by another like its splendid predecessor. I became an animal, I think, and it was glorious."

"And now—?" said Gerald.

"The inevitable. I left him there—at the edge of the forest. Then, as I neared civilization, the faculty of thought seemed to return to me. It came first when I rehearsed my last days with him, and discovered that neither had mentioned when we should meet again. The setting of a date had never occurred to either of us, out there in the open; that we would come together soon, that our future lives must inevitably be in union, had seemed as natural as that day must follow night. Then, when I reached Paul Smith's a mass of mail was handed to me—cards to teas and weddings and the like, that brought to me, without so much as opening their envelopes, the close and scented air of civilization. Among them was a letter in your hand, too; and I opened it. You started—unconsciously, I think—with a transposition from Pater, and later, deliberately discussed a new play by Heijermans which you said you knew would interest me. I read no further. I dropped the letter in my lap—and I thought; I thought for the first time in three months. Then, at Saranac, I telegraphed to him. Nothing had been said of when we should meet again—he had not mentioned how soon he intended returning to his home and his accustomed associations here in town;

but I wired him not to come to me for three weeks."

"As you telegraphed to me," Gerald interposed.

"Yes," she went on. "I decided there should be no influence to draw me toward one life or the other; I wanted to be alone to think. But, Gerald, I found then that I could never be alone again. He walked with me in the glory of the day; his arms were about me in the dark silence of the night. I tried to read again—the old books that had been the very mainstays of existence, and the new ones you had sent me that should have been keen pleasures; but they seemed woefully bloodless and empty. The better pictures, even, seemed so futile after the vital thrill of the real pictures; and I tried music, too, and the best of it was not so eloquent as a single gust of wind through the trees—up there, with him."

Gerald was gazing intently at her, and though his look had incredulity in it, there showed a growing and sympathetic understanding, too.

"That is all," she said, suddenly rising and throwing both arms above her head, "that is all! I telegraphed again—at the end of three days—only three days, Gerald. I telegraphed to him to come to me; I think I should have gone quite mad if I had not."

It was Gerald who rose now. Reaching out his hands, he took both of hers in his.

"I'm so glad," he said; "for I'm sure you've found the truth. He must, indeed, be of the best of persons to have passed the Ice Maiden's alert and searching mind to her guarded heart. It's splendid, Marion, when love like this comes into a life like yours."

She looked up quickly into Gerald's face; and then an oddly quizzical smile flitted across her own.

"It couldn't be true," she said, in a tone of gentle whimsicality; "not you—not you and Lydia!"

It is odd when a man like Gerald Haddon appears to feel the need of taking refuge in the selecting of a

cigarette and the lighting of it. As a matter of fact, the subterfuge was unnecessary, for at that moment a servant came to the door to herald the first of the arriving guests. Many of the small company came at once; Mrs. Wentworth, whose virtuous bulk spread an air of conventionalizing respectability even over a beautiful apartment, having considered it more proper to bring the younger girls under her chaperonage with her in her wagonette. The rooms were soon so abuzz with little groups of chatters that no special notice was taken of Gerald's manner in receiving Lydia Garston. Marion watched it with an amused half-smile that Martin, the rather unusually clever young architect who was talking with her at the time, accepted as a peculiarly understanding recognition of his wit; he mentally underscored his earlier note that Marion Lord was a woman of uncommonly astute appreciation, and expressed again his pleasure at the prospect of sitting on her right at dinner.

Until a few minutes before, Marion had not troubled to so much as definitely disbelieve the chat that had reached her about Gerald and her cousin. Naturally, gossip had never interested her, but several times she had derived amusement from the stories that had come to her about Gerald Haddon. An attempt to translate Greek by a person who barely knows English is, inevitably, an amusing spectacle. The prosaic little circle could not persuade itself to give up this pet enigma; an enigma that owns a railroad and a country house on the east bank of the Hudson is, naturally, hard to give up. The stories about herself and him—about his "hopeless passion" for her, or hers for him; or of some hidden past of his or vaultingly ambitious future of hers that kept them apart—had often amused her; more than once they had laughed together over some especially ridiculous story. Finally, it had seemed that the dull folk had given them up; accepted their unclassable attitude as a peculiar

"institution" of the annual life, like the coaching parade in May and Mrs. Wentworth's ball on the second Monday of every January.

Then, when Marion had opened her letters on her return from the mountains, a hundred hints of a new Haddon romance came to her. Dear, dull Lydia, who had taken her place with her father in their town house during her own absence in the mountains, and Gerald! She recalled now, as she looked past young Martin's epigrams down the hazy vista of the room to the oddly rapt expression with which Gerald gazed on Lydia, that at first she had laughed outright at the mere suggestion. The idea of their being able even to sustain a conversation past the most impersonal of amenities had struck her as peculiarly humorous. She understood her cousin thoroughly; it was not difficult to do so. It was obvious that she was a woman of extraordinary beauty and allurements, and it did not require an observation as keen as Marion's to discern, very soon, that that was really all there was to know about the young widow. She had assiduously, if unconsciously, stunted every development of a never-too-strong mentality, and existed, cheerfully if tumultuously, solely upon palpitating instinct. It could hardly be said, indeed, that she ensnared the succession of proximal men: the allurements was too effortlessly instinctive to be so termed. Matrimony, when in the course of things it came, had passed untroublingly over her. She seemed, vaguely, to have regarded it as a pleasant incident. Two nights before her wedding, Marion recollected, she had caused something of a sensation by revealing herself in private tableaux vivants as "An Egyptian Water-carrier," the indefinite caption being a family council's firm modification of her more bizarre intention; and when, a few months later, her husband's polo pony threw him to his everlasting rest, she had accepted her bereavement with wide-eyed resignation and retired, in extravagant *crêpe*, to Palm Beach.

Throughout the dinner Marion ob-

served Gerald's frequent furtive glances at Lydia across the mound of orchids that separated them. Her cousin was raptly describing the utter lonesomeness of widowhood to a stout bank president, who nearly slighted his sweetbreads in sympathy. Marion, of course, could not hear their conversation, but she was well acquainted with the Orientaly appealing expression of the great, dark, limpid eyes that invariably accompanied this recital of her cousin's, or, as one might better say, that justified it. On the other hand, she could catch just enough words in Mrs. Wentworth's sonorous tones to gather that Gerald had freed himself from verbal exertion by launching her upon the extensive and engrossing topic of her failing digestive powers; it was not difficult to guess that his purpose was a sentimental one.

Gerald caught in sentiment! The thought struck Marion as peculiarly amusing. And yet she felt, almost immediately, an undefinable sense of resentment. Her thoughts were confused, her ocular view, even, seemed blurred. She concluded, absently, that the candlesticks were a shockingly bad height, or the shades too diaphanous: she must make the next holiday an occasion of giving a new set to Gerald. The music struck her as peculiarly tuneless. "Sound without tune," she found herself murmuring. Or was it that young Larned's conversation was aggressively tuneful? To her surprise, Gerald had had the cards changed at the last moment, and instead of Martin she had found her "young man of the mountains" beside her, and he had never ceased talking. He seemed to have said nothing. Marion was glad that she had discovered early that he did not need close attention. His conversation seemed to have neither beginning nor end; unless one considered such external boundaries as its beginning with the hors d'œuvres and its inevitable breaking off with the departure of the women from the table. It flowed slowly, in a sluggish, sentimental stream:

"Like molasses from a keg," she thought, as she glanced at the rugged honesty of the splendid, lumbering physique inside his peculiarly smart evening clothes. Occasionally a remark or two penetrated her, and she found herself wondering whether she hadn't heard him say precisely the same thing in precisely the same words three or four times before during dinner. Once she discovered herself dreading the possibility that his sentimental platitudes would presently form themselves into balladic metre. Later she felt herself repeating in her mind: "Beautiful men should be seen and not heard—men should be seen and not heard."

But, after all, Larned had become at the moment part of the background; rather, she thought, like the music, which would have charmed her more by keeping still, than like the tapestries that hung against the walls or the dull gold sconces that pierced them, which were silently beautiful. She glanced again at her well-groomed and well-bred young neighbor, vaguely thinking how much better adapted he was to being silently beautiful than to any other use. But it was Gerald who occupied her mind. It was resentment; she was sure of it now. She knew that, in the vibrant undercurrent that flashed around the table beneath its surface of pleasant placidity, Lydia was subtly encouraging Gerald's unconscious glances, and she resented it. "It isn't good enough," she murmured mentally.

The colloquialism exactly expressed her feeling. Lydia was not maliciously flirtatious; she knew that. Gerald, obviously, did not realize the completeness of his ensnarement; but that only slightly modified her indignation. Simply, it "wasn't good enough" that any woman—above all, a woman of Lydia's amiable mental vacuity—should play with a man of Gerald's unique and solid worth; she resented it as she would resent a trifling with a symbol sacred to some religion, even though the faith were not her own.

As the women left the table she was

surprised at Gerald's hurried whisper to her as she passed him:

"I must talk to you tonight—very seriously; may I drive you home?"

She murmured a consent, and passed on into the library. At the appearance of coffee she contrived to slip away alone into a secluded corner. She felt peculiarly exhausted; the relief from Herbert Larned's unimaginative worship rested her. She recalled his clumsy attempts to express in words the things that were thrilling when he merely looked them. She dismissed him from her mind. Lydia was singing. She smiled faintly as she thought how unpleasantly the unrestrained abandon of her cousin's method must grate on Gerald's sensitive appreciation of the value of suggestion. Presently, however, she heard her host's voice, he had hastened his guests through their cigars shockingly. She felt, with an unpleasant poignancy, a sense of shameful regret that a man of Gerald's sort could be made ridiculous, even though no one might see it that way but herself.

Marion asked Larned to drive Mrs. Garston home, and then to come back for her. "The coupé is too small for three, and I'd be rather afraid to go at this hour without a man," she said, with a flutteringly timid pressure of her hand; she knew Larned to be one of those especially manly men who are never so happy as when reminded of their indispensability in the protection of helpless femininity. When the last of the guests had gone she turned to Gerald.

"Now," she said, "what is it?" And she succeeded in speaking lightly.

"There is much that I must say to you," he said rather seriously.

She moved silently across the soft rugs with something of the swaying grace of a supple lily waving in a breeze. She sank into her favorite green chair, and placed a soft pink shade before a candle that threw too harsh a glow across her face. But Gerald did not come to sit opposite her as before. Instead, he went into the adjoining room. She heard a chair moved, and then, evidently, Gerald's step upon it.

Then she heard a match scratched. In a moment a cold, hard glare came through the doorway. Without comment, Gerald reentered the library. First, he lighted the gas-brackets on the side-walls, she had never before observed that they were there. Then, again having to resort to a chair because of its awkward height, he lighted each jet in the centre chandelier; she saw that it was rusted from disuse. This done, he blew out each of the soft, low candlelights and extinguished the mellowing glow in the red and pink lamps.

Marion looked about her in surprise. Every detail of the room seemed strange. The embroideries, many with tinsel interwoven in their fabric, appeared peculiarly bizarre and tawdry. She was shocked that the old brocades and uncut velvet looked dusty and soiled rather than mellow and vaguely enchanting; it seemed odd to think of them as worn-out and shabby frippery.

"You must look at things in their real value, Marion," Gerald said; he was standing before her now and gazing down at her. "Love isn't a question of artistic lighting. And it isn't a matter of the particular chap who happens to be lucky enough to be with you up there, in the open places, or someone who comes to you in the witchery of alluring civilization, with the arts of fascination at his command—and a Hungarian band at his back!"

Marion was annoyed that her laugh sounded artificial.

"It won't do, Marion," he went on; but he eased the unnatural strain by sitting casually before her and lighting a cigarette. She motioned negatively when he held the tray of Russians toward her. "It simply isn't good enough, that's all."

She glanced up at her phrase. And then a smile diffused her features. "What isn't good enough?" she asked.

"This man Larned," he answered. "Oh, it would be absurd of us to hesitate at directness. Besides, we haven't much time; you've got to consent to something before you leave these rooms,

and he'll be back for you mighty quickly, I imagine."

"Consent to what?" She changed her mind about a cigarette.

"You mean to marry him, don't you?" His intonation was that of definite affirmation. Marion was pleased at the crude strength in his tone; there had been times when she feared that he might fail to quite arise to some occasions. The unusual light was peculiarly hard and unpleasant; it brought out unfamiliar angles in Gerald's personality: she was keenly conscious of its playing havoc with her own. But, above all, it brought out facts in grotesquely stark and unsightly nakedness. She comprehended more fully than ever before why people who exist without lamps and candles are invariably so unimaginative and crude.

"You mean to marry him, don't you?" Gerald repeated.

"I don't definitely know. I suppose——"

"It would end that way," he interrupted. "That's the trouble—otherwise things might be left to drift. But only the interception of some other end could keep things from that end. What a fate for you, Marion! I thought you had more discernment. Imagine you, of all women, marrying a man for his chest expansion!"

He took out his watch and looked at it. "I must hurry," he continued. "Fortunately, it can be taken for granted that you—the real you—understand the essential truths. But stop to realize things. Picture yourself after the first year—or six months—or two. To long to talk—really to talk—and have only the dumb beauty of a faithful animal to answer you; to languish for companionship and have only that 'nice, clean-minded young man' to crush you with the weight of his 'superbly developed,' noble nothingness."

It was an odd smile, a smile that seemed to pass through him, yet without inflicting pain or meaning to, with which Marion answered him.

"And you can see this—keen, penetrating, understanding Gerald?" He

thought her laugh unpleasantly inapt, almost, indeed, patronizing, but he concluded that his exposition of the facts had been, naturally, painful to her.

"You certainly executed a telling stroke at dinner, though," she went on; "it would, indeed, have been quite fatal if you had let me sit next to Harry Martin's wit, with six-feet-two of beautiful, silent Herbert gazing raptly at me from across the orchids. You've impressed your realities very shrewdly, Gerald: that and"—she glanced elfishly about—"these terrible lights."

"I don't want you to confuse sacrifice with romance. Each person's romance has the color of the rose to herself or him; but it's pretty dull and colorless, if not actually sordid, to the onlooker. And you couldn't help but be an onlooker yourself, almost immediately."

She looked at him more intently now, and her smile had faded. But she seemed to be intent upon her own thoughts rather than on his words.

"It's simply this," he continued. "You must be kept from such damned folly; you've a long life to live among the things that matter—with consequential people, the people who have something to give in return for your splendid self. You must definitely preclude the possibility of such a wasteful union. Will you marry me?"

It might have been expected that Marion would indicate some surprise at such a proposition; no talk of love or marriage had ever occurred between them. Indeed, they had been rather careful to avoid any topic that might, in the slightest, discolor the pure glow of their friendship.

"We don't love each other, of course," she said, in an even tone that affirmed the probability that she had anticipated his suggestion. "But it would be the most reasonable of marriages; I think, in the long roll of years, the happiest. Our friendship goes as deep as love of that sort can; we have mutual respect and admiration and infinite congeniality. All that is very much."

"Very much," he echoed, "and there is much for you to be protected from."

Again she looked up suddenly and rather whimsically at him. At that moment the doorbell rang vigorously.

"That's Larned—in the outer hall now," said Haddon. "He did make it quickly. Well?"

Marion rose and drew her cloak around her; then suddenly realizing the penetrating light, she lifted a lace scarf from her shoulders and, throwing it over her head, drew it about her tired face.

"Then it's like that between you two—already?" was Gerald's comment.

"Yes," she answered; "he doesn't know it, but that's all I mean to him. No, Gerald," she went on, in a voice that had a hardness he had never heard in it before, and in words that came sharp and fast, "it isn't good enough. It's small and mean and worthless when one considers the whole vast world of better things. Come to me tomorrow—at eleven in the morning. No one need know—till afterwards."

Gerald moved toward her, but she slipped past him and was in the soft, red shadows of the little hall when Larned was admitted.

"Oh," she said, looking up into his face, the delicate scarf falling in graceful folds about her shoulders; "it's very good of you to have come back for me—and so quickly, too; one might almost say 'on the wings of——'"

Probably young Larned had a vague idea that there was a neat answer that he might have made to that; but instead he hitched up one of his splendid shoulders in dumb doubt and hit his hat nervously against his left leg; and he used his mouth only for a sort of apologetic guffaw.

It seemed to Gerald peculiarly appropriate that the sun should be shining in its most glorious effulgence as he walked the two miles up the avenue from his chambers to the Lord house at a little before eleven the next morning. The world was, indeed, full of sunshine. Life seemed to stretch before him like a long, rockless, happy

road; and it was no small contribution to his contentment that the succession of joys was as great and as numerous for Marion. In every by-path that his mind took he saw infinite advantages for both; their mutual way was paved with brilliant possibilities.

When he reached the house a footman asked him to come to Miss Lord's own study, on the second floor, instead of waiting in the drawing-room. It was a detail, but it impressed him as just another of Marion's understanding little strokes of tact. Nothing could have been more incongruous with the motive of their marriage than the attaching to it of anything formal or unfamiliar. Anything that would accentuate the change in their estate would be opposed to the spirit of their union; it could, indeed, hardly be said to be anything more than a more intimate continuation of their friendship, with some legal formality for secret protection and public propriety. It would be especially pleasant to greet her, on this morning, in her den, in the presence of the familiar objects which so heterogeneously expressed her diverse nature; the much that was subtly beautiful and the more that was interestingly ugly; the humorous incongruity of such peculiarly personal eccentricities as the adjacency of a roaring lion, in papier-mâché, to a superb gold Buddha, and the unsightly plaster bust of Schopenhauer casting its shadow across a smaller bronze of Byron.

The aggressive rustle of skirts that signaled the coming of a woman struck him as essentially unlike Marion, so he was hardly surprised when her cousin appeared instead. A voluminous gown of many shades of deep yellow heightened the striking beauty of her dark eyes and rich coloring; and evidently it was enough of a morning dress to permit of an extraordinarily becoming carelessness in the arrangement of her masses of black hair. He was struck with the rich fulness of her beauty; he wondered if it could be that it was heightened by the morning light, mellowed by heavy stained-glass windows.

"Don't say you're sorry to see me

instead of Marion," she started with a vigorous burst; "let me enjoy the benefit of the doubt. I don't know anything about anything, you must understand, but I'm wholly sure dear Marion is quite insane. To my knowledge, she sat up all night; and on top of that she dashed out of the house before ten this morning."

Haddon endeavored to show no surprise. He busied himself drawing off his gloves; and then he slipped them on again with the same rapt seriousness.

"Why, I can't say," burst forth Lydia, in a new volcano of voluptuous speech; "but she left a note for you, and asked me to give it to you instead of leaving it with a servant."

"A note?" echoed Gerald, turning toward her.

"Yes, and she murmured something about having inadvertently sealed it, and did I mind very much if she didn't stop to transfer it to a new envelope."

Gerald took the note from her, and moved close to one of the paler panes in the dark windows. The letter was very brief.

"Dear friend," it started, "please forgive me—I meant to; I stayed awake all night meaning to, awfully hard. But with the splendid morning sunlight came Herbert in riding clothes and with his hair tousled by the Autumn breeze. I simply couldn't; I am taking him to the clergyman instead. Forgive me; I

appreciate your offer more than many people could even understand."

He looked up, hardly sure whether he was surprised or not. Lydia was standing a few feet away; her great dark eyes were gazing at him, though it could hardly be said that they gave any definite idea of seeing anything. Her full, red mouth was slightly parted and a wonderful flush suffused her cheeks.

"Lydia," he said suddenly, feeling a tremendous force rise in him, "Lydia, you must know why I've come. It was cowardly of me to resort to Marion as an ambassador. But it seemed impossible that so glorious a creature as yourself could be within my reach. I love you, Lydia, madly and completely—you must have seen it—you must have felt it!"

She drooped her long lashes and looked through them in a way that Gerald had never dreamed of in his life before. She did not speak, though she parted her lips a little more; she swayed slightly, and toward him.

With a bound he went to her. He threw his arms about her and kissed her on the lips and on the hair and on the eyes. As she fell back in his arms a tall table overturned, and the contents crashed to the floor, the small, heavy bronze of Byron breaking the large plaster cast of Schopenhauer into irredeemable bits. But she was close in his arms; he could feel her heart beating against his and their lips were pressed together.



DISILLUSION

By Sinclair Lewis

GREAT was the wine of his song, like panting, ineffable seas,
 Moving to passionate tears, and heating my heart with its lies.
 Swayed with oppressive delight, I sought him and looked in his eyes—
 God! How I shattered the cup of his song when I tasted those lees!

THE SCARECROW

By Virginia Woodward Cloud

THE painter crossed the field, breaking a path through wild carrot and clover, thick, dew-wet and rose-tinged by the rising sun. He settled himself on his camp-stool with his back to a mass of blackberry vines, where a snake-fence divided field from road, and took his palette and brush from the ground, where they had been flung apparently in a hurry. A rough and rocky road it was which wound at the painter's back sharply uphill and down again, reaching along a short, dense stretch of woods, thence past the clover-field which was the hill-top, and perilously down a stony steep to a little run which dashed into a ravine below, with the frolicsome abandon of Nature's babyhood.

The painter proceeded to sketch in a soft line of horizon far before him, against which leaned russet stacks of corn, each in its human posture stooping like the wraith of a Redskin who had stolen out of the woods to reap where perchance he once had sown. These were at the edge of Daddy Mudge's field and orchard, guarded by the figure of a dilapidated scarecrow, propped against the tallest corn-stack. Heavy footsteps sounded coming up the hill at the painter's back, and the figure of a man reached the summit past the woods, and paused. The painter's lazy blue eyes swept from the horizon line back to his canvas, and he painted, apparently oblivious that the man had drawn near and was leaning upon the fence looking curiously over the painter's shoulder.

"I might ha' knowed you'd be the first one up around these parts, Mr. Carr," he remarked.

"I recognize the gentle tones of Mr. Blogg," said the painter, without turning his head. "All hail, High Sheriff of Pocomicah County!"

"That's me all right," said the sheriff, pushing his broad-brimmed hat back from his rubicund face, "an' that's why I ain't been to bed since this time yesterday an' won't get thar tell this time tomorrow, lest I bring down what I'm huntin'. Then it'll pay me, you bet!"

The painter squeezed some cobalt on his palette, and then spoke deliberately.

"The game laws are out, but why is my friend, the Sheriff of Pocomicah, hunting alone and unprotected by his usual retinue? Where is the doughty Hawk Collins, and where, oh, where, is Hughy Culp?"

"Gone to git breakfast. Somebody had ter stay up here," said the sheriff, stooping for a sprig of sorrel.

"And where is my moth-eaten and resigned intimate, Beans?"

"Huh! Beans knows too much, ef he is a dog, to git outer his bed this time o' day!"

"And finally, what uneasy qualm of conscience incites the Sheriff of Pocomicah to hunt at five A.M.?"

"Look a-herel! you painter people don't know a thing, do you?" said the sheriff, in evident enjoyment of the anticipated chaffing.

"We painter people know everything," returned the artist, with a sweep of the brush which implied omniscience and an ownership of the universe, "everything! Even that the Sheriff of Pocomicah is out on a more important errand than to hear the

little birds awaken each in its downy nest."

"Wisht I was thar," said the sheriff, as he drew a pistol from his hip-pocket and balanced it on the fence while he examined it in leisurely fashion; "but bein' up early just now is worth fifty dollars to me mebbly, sir."

"I should go hunting at five A.M. daily," said the painter, "even if I brought down nothing more animated than Daddy Mudge's old scarecrow—which I proceed to paint."

The sheriff laughed wheezily, as if the inner sounds ran the gamut of sundry rolls of flesh before they reached his vocal tubes. He pushed his hat further from his round face and leaned against the fence now, peering curiously at the painter's rapid strokes, with the tolerant contemplation which the complacent ox bestows upon the unutilitarian butterfly.

"Reckon you would, sir, reckon you would! But I ain't huntin' usual game and 'tain't the season fur jack-rabbits, nuther. Fifty dollars is fifty dollars, too. Say, sir, I'll bet that thar fifty, ef I git it, agin the pictur you're paintin' that you can't guess what I'm out sightin' this side o' them woods yonder fur," with a gesture toward the dark brush of woodland to the left of the field, "an' I bet it'll be the first time ye ever got fifty dollars fur the pictur of a gol-darned scarecrow!"

"The very first," said the painter gravely. "I think you're out hunting a poem upon Love's Rising Sun, to dedicate to Miss Posy Robbins, of Yarrow Farm."

The sheriff slapped his trousers leg delightedly and the chuckles broke into a roar.

"Not on your life, sir! But Miss Posy's a beauty now, ain't she?"

"Then, Mr. Blogg"—the painter looked around the field before them, as if in search of the coin of thought to cast upon the imagination's roulette wheel, and pointed with his brush to the scarecrow, behind the distant stack—"then I'll wager Daddy Mudge's scarecrow against your dog Beans that I can guess!"

"Done!" said the sheriff, "though I don't want to lose Beans; he ain't a fancy dog, but he's got good stayin' powers. You tell him to stay thar, an' thar he stays tell the earth cracks in with him."

"And I don't want to lose the scarecrow till I've finished with him as a model," said the painter, "and I think too much of Beans to own him, therefore I straightway swap Beans for the scarecrow. You're after the young chap who shot young Curtain dead last night down at Upshur's Tavern."

The sheriff's chin dropped.

"Now don't you beat Buck!" he uttered. "How'd you know?"

"I told you I knew everything. The scarecrow is mine," said the painter contentedly.

"You kin have him an' welcome. He give me a turn when I come up the hill and seen him standin' thar. Hadn't seen a figger tell I come upon him an' you. Mebbly I better go and disturb him while I shake them stacks loose an' look in 'em. Only thet feller hasn't had a chance ter git outer the woods. He's in thar all right."

"You can't," said the painter easily. "I've had first go. I fixed my landscape and my scarecrow and the stacks and I won't have them upset. Besides, there's nothing in the stacks because I've been over there. Hands off!"

"All right—ef you've seen 'em," said the sheriff, resting his pistol on the fence rail. "He can't git away when we beat them woods after the boys come. Then—" he paused significantly.

"And then—" said the painter, balancing his brush.

"There ain't nothin' left fur that chap but a piece o' hemp. Hawk Culp, he's sightin' the other side," said the sheriff significantly.

"Poor chap," said the painter; but he did not mean Hawk Culp.

"Naw, he ain't! What you sayin' that fur, Mr. Carr? It's pore Sam Curtain what he shot. Sam was a low-down drunkard all right, but this here college feller didn't have no right to come 'round here an' play cards with

him and drink an' shoot him afterwards. Well, we'll git him all right. He'll do well to poke his head outer them woods before the place gits awake, 'cause I'd ruther hustle him back ter Pocomicah Jail then to hev a care of him afore I git thar."

"Surely they wouldn't—" began the painter, his brush stopping abruptly.

"Sure they would, then. They'd stop him at the first big tree. Well, he'll git hungry and look out after a while."

"By the way, Mr. Blogg, you've had no breakfast," said the painter suddenly. He pointed with his brush down the steep road behind them, toward the ravine in the shadow. "You know where my shack is. Step down and get some coffee off the stove. There's ham and bread there, too—the coffee ought to be good about this time. I'll do your patrol for a few minutes. You can search the shack while you're there. You're bound to do that, aren't you?"

"Sure I!" grinned the sheriff. "Thar ain't nothin' else on that side. I'd do more'n that fur a cup o' your coffee about now. I reckon it'll be all right to step down yonder, 'cause you kin shout ef anybody shows out o' the woods, an' I'd be here afore he could git acrost the field."

"Undoubtedly," said the painter. "I'll shout if an owl hoots."

"They don't hoot in the day," chuckled the sheriff enjoyingly. "You better keep this here, sir." He held the pistol out, and the painter dropped it on the ground beside him.

"Thanks; I like firearms for ornament mainly," he said.

The sheriff was still chuckling as his heavy frame lurched down the steep road and disappeared at its turn below. It was a full minute before the painter rose and scanned the road behind him, then he vaulted quickly across the field to the corn-stacks against which the scarecrow leaned. He leaped upon the tallest stack.

"Drop!" he said peremptorily to the scarecrow, and the scarecrow fell in a shaking heap to the ground.

"Gosh!" it exclaimed, "if I'd kept that position another minute I'd ha' dropped dead! What did you keep him talking for? Where shall I go? He'll come back, I tell you!"

It was the white, horrible panic of a soul brought to bay.

The painter looked down sternly into the ashen working face at his feet; the scarred face of youth it was, masked by terror.

"You've just about a minute, my boy," he said, "and if you hadn't broken out of the woods while he was climbing the hill you wouldn't have that. The posse is coming up now. I never saw you before in my life, until you came down on me, and I may be all wrong. God knows why I want to help you! Do you hear me"—his hand suddenly caught the youth's arm sternly—"God knows, I don't! You're only a boy and you need a chance. Get up quick."

"Where—where?" panted the scarecrow, struggling to his feet. "Help me to get away from them! They'll kill me, don't you know they'll kill me?"

"Yes, they'll kill you if they get you," said the painter, "but there's no one up here yet except myself. Cut across the field while the sheriff's in my shack. It shelves along the ravine road. Lie low down there until you hear him come up here, then slip down to my shack and drink some coffee, and hide yourself there till I come."

"God bless you!" muttered the scarecrow.

"Well, just bear in mind that He's a jealous God, and prefers to do His own manslaughter," said the painter.

The scarecrow dashed suddenly across the field and disappeared over its crest. The painter drew a sigh of relief and settled his corn-stack. Three minutes later he sat calmly painting. Stroke after stroke the blossoming day grew flower-like and fine under his brush. The sheriff climbed the hill panting and wiping his round face upon his shirt-sleeve. Again he leaned on the fence behind the painter, and now lighted his pipe comfortably.

"That was prime coffee, sir," he said, "and I've taken the liberty o' searchin' the shack jest to say 'twas done. Now I reckon I'll be collectin' my fifty dollars from that there bunch o' trees over yonder. I hear the boys a-comin'."

"And I'll go down and have some breakfast," said the painter, wiping his brushes. "Drop in some day, sheriff, and let me show you how I can cook a dinner."

"I'll do it, Mr. Carr. Hello!" he added suddenly, "where's your scarecrow gone to?"

"Pulled him down. He marred the landscape," said the painter.

"Well, I reckon you kin put him up again after a bit," said the sheriff; "anyhow, he was yourn all right!"

Voices and heavy footsteps sounded on the road. The posse was approaching and the raucous tones of Hawk Culp rose upward. The painter folded his camp-stool and gathered up his implements.

"Yes, he seemed to be mine, but the problem is what to do with a scarecrow after you've got him," he said.



ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES

By Elsa Barker

O LITTLE child, O wide-eyed wondering child!
 Well! do I know you are a captured wild
 Bird from the outer blue, that beats its wings
 Against the barriers of material things.
 How many miles into the awful vast
 Your mother must have soared—to seize you fast
 And bring you back with her, to be a white
 Proof of the fearless journey! The sunlight
 Still half bewilders you, and in your sleep
 You smile because the darkness is so deep
 After the earth-glare, and the rest so kind
 After the search for One you cannot find.

You are the Dream made flesh. You are the grail
 Pilgrim—another, passionate and frail,
 Leaving the House of Beauty for the quest
 Of that high Vision by no man possessed.
 Indomitable must be God's desire
 To realize Life's secret and acquire
 Mastery, when He sends you one by one,
 Eternally, to question the bright sun
 And the dark earth and the indifferent stars!
 O Baby, will you pass the golden bars
 Guarding the pathway to the great abode?
 Or will you leave your dust to make the road
 Softer for one who follows? I am blind,
 Even as Love or Justice, and I find
 No answer to the riddle that has wrung
 The souls of mothers since the world was young.

A ROMANCE OF TWO ROMANCES

By Robert Rudd Whiting

“THESE literary critics who are forever carping at the anachronisms and inconsistencies of the modern historical romance little realize the cruel suffering that would be bound to arise from the destruction of the very form of literature they so vehemently deplore.”

The speaker gazed at his dreamful green drink with his dreamy blue eyes.

“If a man’s house displeases our eye,” he continued, “have we any right to tear it down and leave him homeless? Certainly not. And yet that is precisely what these critics would unconsciously be doing should they succeed in pulling down the modern historical romance merely because its many anachronisms offend their taste.

“You fail to see any similarity between the two cases? Ah, that is because you have never heard the true story of the origin of the modern historical romance. Listen:

“It all happened years ago when I was at work upon my great masterpiece, ‘The Gauntlet of Gherdunt.’ What? You’ve never heard of it, you say? Of course not. It was never finished. If you’ll only have patience for a few minutes you’ll soon see why.

“I had written as far as Chapter V, and had come to know my hero well. And I want to say right here that a finer knight than Sir Harry de Loup ne’er swore an oath to succor the weak, to right wrong and to serve ladies. To me he had become more like a helpful friend than a servile character to be sent about blindfold, galloping from one corner of the plot to another, merely to suit his author’s whim.

“He collaborated with me, discussing

his future course at each important turn in the story. As you can readily understand, the advice of such a man to a modern author, entirely dependent upon books of reference for his local color, was oftentimes invaluable. I learned really to love that hero.

“When I took up my pen at the beginning of Chapter V I found Sir Harry awaiting me without the old Hermitage at the edge of the Enchanted Forest, where I had left him at the close of the preceding chapter. He had donned his armor and was mounted, for he knew he was to ride far.

“‘God be with you, brother,’ he greeted me. ‘For whom do I ride this day? For God? for King? or for my lady fair?’

“‘Harry,’ I told him gravely, ‘I have planned serious business for you this day. Know you the old road by Hollyrood Abbey? Before I have penned ten pages more the black Gherdunt with the fainting form of the fair Lady Enid across his saddle will ride that way. Off, if you would save her!’

“‘Ten small pages of large handwriting in which to reach Hollyrood Abbey?’ questioned Sir Harry doubtfully. ‘Zounds, man! ’Tis a good fifteen pages’ ride. Can’t you pad it out a bit? Give me two pages extra and I’ll have the scurvy rascal ere the ink is dry on your paper.’

“‘You’re on,’ I told him willingly. ‘Twelve pages be it, then. God speed you, Harry!’

“He whirled his horse and galloped into the mysterious depths of the Enchanted Forest, the wolf’s brush of the de Loups flying bravely from his helmet.

"And now we'll leave Sir Harry for a while and switch over to a modern society novel, 'The Quagmire,' that a friend of mine named Jowens was working on at the same time that I was writing 'The Gauntlet of Gherdunt.'

"The heroine of Jowens's book was one of the regular modern society-novel kind—one of those smart, well-groomed girls, you know—does everything well and can make epigrams before breakfast. As I remember it he called her Elizabeth in 'The Quagmire.'

"Well, after she'd dawdled along for about fifty pages or so at week-ends and things and had become engaged to a perfect bouncer, Jowens called her to mind and said:

"See here, Elizabeth, I know you'd a great deal rather just sit around at dinners and things a bit longer and continue to be the life of the whole party; but really, you know, here we are almost a quarter-way through this story and you haven't even met the hero yet. Now——"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Elizabeth. "I can see him perfectly now without having met him. Tall, broad-shouldered, strong chin, and a certain indefinable air about him that appeals to women; won his "blue" at Oxford and is equally at home on a South African battlefield or the floor of a London ball-room. And, oh, yes—instead of one long name he has two little ones that he harnesses with a hyphen and drives tandem. How many, many books have I waded through with that same tiresome hero! Oh, well, I suppose there's no help for it. What's it to be this time? Rescue from fire at a house-party or merely a punctured tire?"

"No," Jowens assured her laughingly. "It's older than either of those. Good old-fashioned runaway rescue this time. Horse shies at a motor-cycle and bolts; you're thrown; foot catches in stirrup and the beast drags you along with your head on the ground; rescued by hero out for a morning canter just as you fall in faint. It sounds dangerous, I admit, but you've done the same thing so many times before that it really shouldn't bother you much."

"Yes, and the last time I did it I got such a frightful shaking-up that I was laid up in bed for two chapters and had to miss the only decent dinner you ever described in your life. Still, if it's all part of the story I suppose there's no way out of it."

"She started to go, but paused at the door and said:

"By the way, I know it's awfully foolish of me, but in case anything *should* happen that would permanently put me out of the story, can I count on you to have some messages delivered for me? You know that dreadful old Marquis de Krepit? Well, I wish you'd have the next woman to whom he pays inane compliments tell him that she had no idea before that the age of chivalry was seventy-eight. That ought to squelch him for a while."

"And then that horribly made-up old Lady Rouge who is forever confiding to one how shockingly naughty she is. Do have that pert American girl tell her that she really can't be as bad as she's painted. I meant to tell her that myself the next chance I had."

"And—oh, yes, the next time General Sotford begins to pound the table and announces that "the sun never sets on British possessions," have young Archie Chetwynd ask him if that's why he always looks as if he hadn't been to bed. Rather good, that one, don't you think?"

"Why, of course, I'll make a note of all these bequests if you insist, Elizabeth," Jowens told her, "but I'm perfectly positive you'll be able to use them yourself. You know very well that I'd cheerfully sacrifice the whole story rather than send you on this ride if I had the slightest idea that anything serious was really going to happen to you."

"Oh, well, it's probably just because I'm feeling a bit out of sorts today. Good-bye."

"Bright and early on page 52, at the beginning of a new chapter, Elizabeth rode forth on Archie Chetwynd's big black hunter, Satan. The stable-boys and grooms begged and implored her to take some other mount, for

Satan was a perfect fiend that even the men were afraid to ride. But she persisted, of course. Not that she really wanted to, you understand, but because she simply had to in order to be in keeping with her character.

"In accordance with instructions she started down the old Rottingham post-road, one of the most ancient and historic highways in England.

"Easy there, Satan! Easy, boy," she whispered, reining him in. "We're only on page 53, and our hero isn't due until a quarter-past 57, you know."

"But Satan was not to be quieted. His ears were pricked up expectantly and he was fretting at the bit.

"Stop it!" she commanded, and then suddenly she, too, became agitated and strained her ears.

"From afar off down the road came a faint sound of galloping hoofs—tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup!

"It was drawing nearer and was now quite distinct.

"Tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup!

"Fool!" muttered Elizabeth. "He's over four pages ahead of time. Why, we haven't even met the motor-cycle that's going to frighten us, yet."

"Tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup, tr-r-rup! There was a wild hallooing and a shouting of strange oaths. In another moment the rider must round the bend in the road. Elizabeth hadn't a second to lose. With an assurance born of long experience she drove her spur deep into Satan's flank. The infuriated beast plunged madly forward, throwing her from her seat. She was dimly conscious that her foot had caught in the stirrup and that her head was being bumped over ruts and stones. Then everything became red and blurred, and the bumping ceased. She had fainted.

"Ho, ho! Black dog!" she heard a lusty voice ring out as she began to come to her senses again. "Unhand yon maid or take your vantage and expect no more!"

"A rigid arm lifted her from the ground and drew her on a swiftly galloping horse. She was sitting in front of her rescuer and the same rigid arm

held her fast. What made her back so cold? she wondered. How oddly the horse was saddled, and the riding-crop that—Riding-crop? 'Twas a medieval sword! She glanced quickly behind her.

"Oh!"

"She almost swooned again.

"Od's blood!" It was her rescuer's turn to be amazed. "How camest thou here, wench?" he demanded sharply.

"That would seem a question for you to answer," Elizabeth told him haughtily. "In the meantime you may help me to dismount. I am not in the habit of riding around the country mornings with stray revelers from fancy-dress balls."

"Tell me, child, art thou not the fair Lady Enid who was to ride this way in the foul clutches of the black Gherdunt?"

"For the first time Sir Harry's eyes fell upon Elizabeth's riding-habit. They opened wide and stared.

"How now? What outlandish dress is this? Can it be that after all thou art not the fair heroine of 'The Gauntlet of Gherdunt'? And art thou art not, as truly I am beginning to believe, who art thou, then? In sooth, there was so much dust and hubbub on the road that I seized the first dame I saw in distress without half looking. Marry!"—he was gazing into her wondrous eyes—"I doubt not had I been wholly looking I would have seized the same fair dame!"

"Elizabeth blushed.

"No, I am not the lady you seek," she told him, the true explanation of their meeting slowly dawning upon her. "It is true that I expected to be rescued here this morning, but not by you. I am the heroine of another book, 'The Quagmire,' a novel of twentieth-century life that I fear you would not understand."

"Then I must take my lady back that she may be in time for her rightful rescuer?" questioned Sir Harry wistfully.

"She would be glad to be rescued from that rightful rescuer," Elizabeth told him softly.

"Then he will find himself just in time, if he ride hard, to rescue the second fairest lady in all England—the Lady Enid. But come"—he gave his steed a touch of the spurs—"twill never do to let them find us here. Down by the Abbey yonder I know a road that modern horse can never follow. It hasn't existed for near five hundred years . . . Dear lady!"

"But love at first sight always did have its troubles. Where was this fine young couple to live after their marriage? Much as I cared for Sir Harry I couldn't have a flippant young modern society woman tripping through 'The Gauntlet of Gherdunt,' asking all my medieval knights how they ever kept their trousers from rusting at the seashore, and such rot.

"On the other hand, there wasn't much place for Sir Harry de Loup in any book where Elizabeth would be at home. Of course he could stand up as a suit of armor in a corner of some old country house while an unsympathetic author made his wife flirt outrageously with a lot of young idiots she didn't care

about, but that would hardly be pleasant for a man of Sir Harry's type.

"You know what a time real flesh-and-blood people have when they go hunting apartments. Well, it's a thousand times worse with fiction characters out hunting for a book in which to live. The meanest janitor that ever lived isn't in it for downright cussedness with an ordinarily exacting author.

"So you see, Sir Harry de Loup and his lady Elizabeth were in a pretty bad fix. But just as they were about to give up in despair their luck turned, and they found a home where they and their descendants could live happily all the rest of their days; a home in which an old-time knight might carry a fragrant Havana beneath his surcoat, and in which his lady could press the electric button for her coffee and rolls each morning. In short, the modern historical romance had come into vogue.

"And that's why I maintain that these literary critics . . . What? Must you? Well, I'm glad to have seen you, anyway."



"O WAD SOME POWER!"

ONCE on a time a woman at Christmas made up her mind to be sensible and give her friends only useful presents. She found it a much harder task than if she had bought a lot of thoughtless things and distributed them haphazard, for she had to study the peculiarities of each friend and to try and remember the one thing lacking that would make her happy. But by putting on her thinking-cap and sitting up at night she at last congratulated herself that she had succeeded. But lo and behold! When her friends received the presents they were furious.

"What shocking taste!" they exclaimed. "How little she appreciates the true Christmas spirit! How could she imagine we don't already possess the necessities of life! It is most insulting! We will never speak to her again!"

MORAL—Never try to please everybody.

J. J. O'CONNELL.

FAME AND ANTIETAM SIMMS

By L. H. Bickford

BOARDING the suburban train at its starting station, the Rev. Anti-etam Simms sank into one of the cane side-seats and began to study the advertising panels. Other passengers spread out their evening papers, and as the car became crowded moved on grudgingly and seemed unconscious of the skirted loveliness that clung to the straps up and down the aisle. Force of habit, rather than unselfish courtesy, prompted the slim young man in the black coat to get up when he was finally impressed that few, if any, were making way for the ladies. The young woman in the gray tailor-made suit sank into the vacated seat with sweet words of appreciation framed by a voice that was familiar. Then he saw that he had obliged Miss Mary Wayslip instead of an indefinite person and he told himself that he was indeed fortunate—a discovery that was all the more cheering since she at once assumed an attitude of friendly intimacy and began chattily to tell him of her outing in the Canadian woods. For Miss Wayslip was a parishioner and somehow there had been an unpleasant gap in life during her absence. Mr. Simms intimated as much in a delicate, clerical way and was answered with a smile and a query as to his own delayed but well-earned vacation. People would miss him, of course, she added with charming sympathy, yet a year in a suburban parish certainly entitled one to a change of scene, and as for that, all work and no play—

And so on, until Mr. Simms had a very comfortable sense of companionship and became concerned lest the rain should cease and he would be

without excuse for stopping at her station and offering his umbrella—carried, naturally, by himself. For he had observed with secret gladness that she was not so provided. At this pleasant stage of the casual and happy meeting, however, Mr. Simms was momentarily distracted by the movement of the man who sat at the left of Miss Wayslip and who so turned his newspaper that a large, black headline obtruded itself across the vision of the standing cleric, exploiting this information:

ANTIETAM SIMMS, 80 TO 1 SHOT, WINS

Mr. Simms stirred slightly, believing himself to be the victim of some optical freak. Miss Wayslip had returned to the subject of the Canadian woods and did not note that his attention wavered. He looked again at the headline. Then he glanced down the car. Evidently the sporting extras were favored at this hour, for many passengers held a pink or green sheet studded with imposing type and as many of these were duplicates of that he had first seen, the statement thereon was generally confirmed. A pale blue extra, of another brand, had a variant, however. On this he read:

ANTIETAM SIMMS, RANK OUTSIDER,
FIRST AT BELMONT

Now, Mr. Simms was no guileless fool. It was true that an "eighty to one shot" was a sort of shot with which he was unfamiliar and there was an intimation of reproach in "rank outsider" that disturbed him, but for all this he knew that the language of the headlines was the language of the racetrack and he knew, furthermore, that the horse that was starred in the

evening prints was named after his ministerial self. What concerned him at the moment, therefore, was not his share in the unfortunate matter, but the possible effect of these flaring announcements on Miss Wayslip should she see them. It seemed to him that his name was being flaunted all over the car and that she could not fail, sooner or later, to become aware of it. Accordingly, he at once concentrated his efforts toward avoiding that calamity. On the immediate point of danger, the man at the left, he made a rear attack by simply moving down a step and turning his back to the interested reader. This shut off Miss Wayslip's view in that direction. But it opened possibilities across the aisle, for there a person with the "rank outsider" edition was sadly contemplating the editorial columns on the back of his paper, leaving the black-lettered first page open to general inspection. A panic now possessed him and he answered only in hysterical monosyllables as Miss Wayslip ran on about the Canadian woods and stopped now and then to ask a question. And all at once came the catastrophe. A small man on the right of Miss Wayslip, aware, evidently for the first time, that an acquaintance was sitting just across the aisle, lifted his voice in one of those suddenly quiet moments that will come over even a suburban train, and asked distinctly:

"George, did you happen to have a little bit on Antietam Simms today?"

And George, greeting his friend, replied:

"No, I never even heard of the skate."

Miss Wayslip, who had ceased to talk about the woods, looked curiously at the man who had asked the question and then at the one who had answered it.

"Why—" she began.

Mr. Simms grasped his strap firmly and gazed wildly down at her.

"Yes," he began incoherently, "the ideal vacation spot is the forest. It seems to me that I never hear the whispering of the trees that I do not

think—" Here he faltered miserably, for she was paying no attention to him. Instead her eyes were fixed on the opposite green sheet that proclaimed the triumph of Antietam Simms, the rank outsider, while her ears drank in the information, furnished by George, that if the racing game were honest he would eat his hat, and his friend's hat and the hat of every man in the car, for had he not that afternoon, on the most trustworthy advices, wagered that Dolores would win this same fourth race, and by what argument should she be beaten by a horse without a past? Out of which babble Miss Wayslip grasped little—enough, however, to start a line of thought. She turned from the green sheet and glanced up at the now miserable young man who hung over her. He had a guilty look, and although she was plainly mystified about the headline and comment she had overheard, she could not fail to connect him in some way with the evidently sensational event at Belmont, and she felt that all was not well—that Mr. Simms bore some relation to a gross, worldly matter that did not befit his calling.

And as she pondered it she sat in silence while he, stupidly enough, clung to the strap and strived, out of the whirl in his brain, to find words that would offer an explanation—for the hideous incident really admitted of explanation, although a crowded car was no place for it. But he was for the time as tongue-bound as if he faced a cannibal crew in a nightmare, with the boiling cauldron in plain view and his voice refusing to perform its office even by way of protest. The result was that when Miss Wayslip's station was called he still dangled, and dumbly, from the strap while she, with a slight and frigid nod, passed out onto the rain-swept platform and was gone.

Thus a journey that had started with lively possibilities ended in gloom, and as Mr. Simms walked alone under his umbrella from the next stop, he thought bitterly how perfect innocence often brings its own damnation. And particularly he was grieved over that

paternal enthusiasm that had caused him to be named after a battlefield, whereby he might be singled out from among men, while the commonplace John, William and Henry Simmses might go their way and prove an alibi even if an entire racing stable happened to be named in their honor. For, although Antietam Simms knew he was the victim of what had been intended as a compliment, the situation presented ghastly embarrassments—similar to that which had just occurred—and verged, as well, upon scandal. Nor was his mind made easier when, on reaching his study, he found there a telegram from his bishop, which read:

Simms, Woodbine—Have just seen evening papers. Astounded. What is the explanation?—RYDER.

Mr. Simms read the despatch over thrice. Then he went in to dinner, a meal that offered him no attractions and which proceeded from soup to finger-bowl before he was conscious that he had partaken of it. Indeed, he was about to leave the table when James, whose questioning, almost furtive movements he had neglected to note, finally found courage to break in on his preoccupation.

"I beg pardon," said James, fixing his employer's attention. "I beg pardon—but shall we advertise for a new coachman at once, sir?"

"A new coachman?" repeated Mr. Simms, uncomprehending, but vaguely remembering that he had ordered the carriage to meet him at the station and that it was not there.

"Yes, sir—John left this afternoon. You know he hasn't been very well pleased here, and now that he's made this killing he's thrown up the job. Rather low down, if you want my opinion, sir—and he might have passed about the tip."

"Killing?" exclaimed Mr. Simms. "What did John do? What has happened?"

James reassured him.

"A sporting term, sir. I should have said winnings. You see, John saw the entries at Belmont this morning, and he got forty to one for place—and

I should say that his condition after he heard from the third race was such that you couldn't have permitted him to stay here any longer, sir, considering that this is a Christian household."

John slightly emphasized the two concluding words of his sentence as if he entertained a slight but perfectly reasonable doubt of the virtue he proclaimed.

"You mean," asked Mr. Simms, and the headlines waved again through his tired brain, "that John has been—er—wagering on horses?"

"He played," answered James with another touch of criticism, "Antietam Simms."

Mr. Simms's pale face was swept by a flood of red.

"Just so," he said, with some effort. "A—that is, a very grave mistake has been made, James. As for John, if he had not resigned I should have discharged him. I think we had best advertise, as you suggest—and we must have the best of characters from the next coachman. Inquire particularly if he is inclined to gambling."

He congratulated himself that he presented his wonted attitude of dignity, even under the unusual circumstances, as he passed to the door of the dining-room. As for James, he hastened to lay the developments before the cook—developments that were later increased in mystery by the report of the housemaid. This report was to the effect that Mr. Simms was almost constantly at the telephone until very late that night, a fact of which she could not be ignorant considering the penetrating nature of the gentleman's voice and that, at times, he seemed to be talking to peculiar people, judging from his remarks. Indeed, he appeared to be very angry, and once she was certain she heard him declare that, race or no race, the party he was conversing with and whose ear he seemed to have obtained only after much trouble, must see him without fail. And it had been her further privilege to hear Mr. Simms call up the bishop on the long-distance wire and, she was bound to say, almost plead with him.

As to what was going on she had her own conclusions. But for that matter so had the cook, and so had James.

Mr. Simms appeared at breakfast, pale but calm. He did not open the morning paper, as was his custom, seeming, rather, to shrink from it. And James, not unmindful of this, reported the circumstance on his first visit to the kitchen. In truth, Mr. Simms was experiencing a distaste for the press, including even the conservative journal that came with his coffee and which must be at least a distant cousin of the green and yellow undesirables that had screamed his name up and down the car the evening before. But it was destined that the press was not to pass him lightly by, and he had proceeded no farther than the rolls when Susan, begging his pardon, but the gentleman was insistent, presented a card bearing the name of Henry Alden Weathers.

"Who says," she explained, "that he's a reporter for the *Gargoyle*, sir, and that it's most important."

It was not in the nature of Mr. Simms to dissemble, although then and there he would have been pleased to plead illness. Instead he gave the conventional directions, and when he presently entered the library to meet his caller he was still pale but calm, even though slightly inclined to resent the visit.

"Our city editor," began Mr. Weathers, of the *Gargoyle*, plunging after the manner of his kind into his subject as soon as Mr. Simms had waved him to a seat, "asked me to look you up about something that struck him as a rather peculiar coincidence. You probably know that one of the winners at the Belmont racetrack yesterday was the horse Antietam Simms?"

Mr. Simms cleared his throat. It would be folly to deny that he did not know it. Nevertheless he fingered the newspaper cutting Mr. Weathers had thrust at him, and fenced for time.

"I take no interest in racing," he remarked, quickly conscience-stricken as he recalled that this was not strictly true since, after the evening before, this subject had most unwillingly oc-

cupied his thoughts. "That is, of course, naturally, considering my position——"

"Duggleby—he's our city editor," went on Mr. Weathers easily, "is always getting up little human interest yarns, and when he came across the name of the horse and remembered that you—that there was a Rev. Antietam Simms at the Woodbine church, he spotted a story right away and called up Pa Burkett, who owns the horse, and asked him about it. Pa said the horse was named after a friend of his, and that it was a good story all right, but there seemed to be some misunderstanding and that we'd have to see you. Now, what I want to know is: How did it come about?"

The young man smiled winningly. It was Mr. Simms's first experience with a reporter. On one of his rare visits to the theatre he had seen one enacted in a play written by Mr. Augustus Thomas, and just now the incident crossed his mind, although he was puzzled to recall the manner in which the reporter had been treated by the other characters.

"Well," he admitted finally, "I have met Mr. Burkett—I wouldn't exactly say he was a friend. The meeting was somewhat casual. But if you will excuse me I would prefer not to talk about the matter. There has been some mistake. The truth is, I don't quite understand it myself, excepting that it is all very embarrassing. But there seems to have been some comment, and last evening I called up both Mr. Burkett and the bishop and——"

The bishop? Mr. Weathers sat in an attitude of intense interest.

"And they were kind enough—that is, the bishop was kind enough, to consent to drop over here this morning and advise me. That is all."

This may have seemed all to Mr. Simms, who, now that he had treated the reporter with what he conceived to be the utmost kindness, expected his caller to rise at once and depart. But Mr. Weathers made no movement of that sort.

"Were you named after the battle?" he questioned with sweet directness.

Mr. Simms slightly raised his eyebrows.

"That is neither here nor there," he felt compelled to say.

"It's a patriotic kind of name," commented Mr. Weathers. "You don't often hear it. I can understand why a man should be named after a battle easier than I can understand why a horse should be named after a minister. You must see that it is odd."

"I am not prepared to say that this horse was named after me," declared Mr. Simms with some spirit. "At any rate, not with my consent."

"Oh, certainly not," coincided Mr. Weathers, "and yet it apparently has been—and there you are."

Sure enough, there he was! Mr. Simms looked helplessly at the reporter. He had never been played with after this manner and he was unequal in the contest. He felt that there was a gentle banter to the remarks of Mr. Weathers. He felt, also, that Mr. Weathers was not taking him seriously. And this was true. Mr. Weathers was merely interested in arriving at his story. It annoyed him to discover a semi-opposition.

"Duggleby," resumed the reporter when it was evident that Mr. Simms proposed to rest under a chilling silence, "thought it would be a good thing to ask in Woodbine if anybody had happened to profit on the long shot, and I've been looking around the place and, singularly enough, the only person who seemed to have taken a chance was your coachman. But I suppose a coachman, whether he works for a minister or a trust, naturally keeps an eye on the fast ones."

"My coachman left my employ last evening," said Mr. Simms severely. He fancied this reply would impress Mr. Weathers with the fact that he knew when to do his duty. He almost regretted John had not waited to be discharged.

"Yes," Mr. Weathers replied immediately, "so one of your deacons, Mr. Harcourt, told me."

"Dea-deacon Harcourt," stammered Mr. Simms. "He knows?"

"Why, bless your heart, my dear sir, everybody knows. Do you suppose a thing like this isn't talked about in a little two-by-four suburb where nothing ever happens? Come now, don't you think you had better tell me the story?"

The insinuation aroused Mr. Simms.

"I object to your inference that I am covering anything up, sir," he said warmly, "for it amounts to that. And I have no story to tell. If you will be kind enough——"

But his flash of temper suddenly spluttered on the presence of Susan, who, fluttering deferentially, was showing in the bishop. She scurried out almost immediately to answer a bell-summons that followed the entrance of that august person, and for an instant the front hall seemed to seethe with the incoming of many persons, although it transpired there were but two—a heavy, flashily dressed man and an equally vivid-appearing woman. The man wore a suit of generous checks, carried a brown derby hat in one hand and a cane in the other, and from his bright blue necktie blazed a horseshoe of diamonds. These diamonds reflected others worn by his companion—indeed, her hands appeared to be loaded with them, and as she raised her veil they glittered icily. Susan, who had evidently besought their cards, had been pushed aside as inconsequent, and they entered the room almost on the heels of the bishop.

The actors in Mr. Simms's little drama were thus suddenly assembled without regard to cues, and the result was a momentary embarrassment. It was quickly broken by the gentleman in checks, who pushed forward and presented himself to Mr. Simms.

"Well, doctor," he said cordially, "you see us here accordin' to promise. I guess you remember mommer all right?"

Mr. Simms remembered mommer. After he had clasped the jeweled hand she extended—the while Mr. Weathers, for some reason, was hugging knees against his chair—he turned toward the bishop. So did the man in checks,

expectantly. And so did mommer. It was not that the bishop impressed either of these callers as being important or that they knew that they were in the presence of a representative of a churchly supreme court, but they supposed he was a friend of their friend and that a presentation would naturally follow. In their sphere of life it was customary to introduce the crowd. Mr. Simms hesitated, then plunged.

"This, Bishop Ryder," he said, "is Mr. Burkett—and Mrs. Burkett."

The two lightly shook the episcopal hand. Then they turned on Mr. Weathers.

"Mr. Weathers," supplied Mr. Simms hastily. These formalities done, the company was seated and another pause fell. It was broken by the bishop clearing his throat.

"Mr. and Mrs. Burkett," said Mr. Simms to the bishop, embracing this opening, "are the per—are the lady and gentleman you were kind enough to tell me over the telephone last evening you would come here and meet. I am not sure," he turned to the reporter, "that this is a matter for the press."

"I think," declared Mr. Weathers promptly, "that it may prove an especially interesting matter for the press."

"You are from the *Gargoyle*?" asked Mr. Burkett interestedly. Mr. Weathers nodded.

"I know Duggleby," said Mr. Burkett. "He called me up last night about this, after I'd heard from the doctor here." He turned to Mr. Simms. "Anybody that's sent here from Duggleby is O.K. He's all right. Don't need to be offish about him, take my word for it. If Duggleby puts it in it'll be put in right."

"I see," interposed the bishop suavely, "no reason why the press should be eliminated. Er—in fact, it may be a distinct advantage to have Mr. Weathers here, under the circumstances. You must remember, my dear Antietam, that the press has already had much to do with this somewhat unfortunate affair. I refer," said the bishop to Mr.

Burkett, "to your racehorse, concerning which there has been so much publicity."

"Well," answered Mr. Burkett in a gratified way, "the little one certainly did break into fast company all right, eh?"

"I told pa he'd do it, sure," added mommer, smiling on the bishop. "We both said we bet the doctor would be surprised when he saw what a live one we'd named after him. I don't suppose you happened to have a little bit of anything on, Mr. Bishop?"

Mr. Simms shuffled uneasily. Mr. Weathers curled slightly in his chair. But the bishop merely smiled.

"It is hardly necessary, I think," he replied, "for me to say that I did not. But this brings us to the point of your visit—the name of your horse. Mr. Simms has come to the conclusion that it would be best to change it."

Both Mr. Burkett and mommer looked their astonishment.

"Change it?" echoed the former. "And him coppin' the roll on his first start, with Dolores the favorite? Besides, it's bad luck to change the name of a winner. Why—"

Mr. Simms now spoke for himself.

"The bishop is quite right. I appreciate your kindly intentions, Mr. Burkett, and better than anybody I understand the circumstances that prompted you to—er—honor me, after this fashion. But I assure you I am overwhelmed. And I fear you rather overestimate what I did."

"I don't forget a friend," broke in Mr. Burkett warmly. "Jake Burkett never yet forgot a friend. And a man that saved me a cool ten thousand plunks ain't goin' to be allowed to fade out in the dim distance with me just standin' back and sayin' 'good day to you.' I told you I'd remember what you'd done, and, by whip, when I got that little crack ready I told mommer here that then was the time to show that we wasn't handin' out any tin medals. 'That young feller,' says I, 'deserves the best we've got and right here is where we live up to expectations.' And Antietam Simms ain't

won his last race yet, you can bet all that's in the long pink stocking on that."

"I see," said the bishop. "You christened the horse after Mr. Simms because you believe he saved your life?"

"Nothin' more," responded Pa Burkett, "and nothin' less—just that. You can judge for yourself: I am comin' out of O'Brien's pool-room—oh, I know there ain't supposed to be any pool-rooms," for Mr. Weathers took on a sophisticated smile, "but all the same I am comin' out of one and I not only had my pile but part of McGoorty's, who had an interest in my stable. Well, I am spotted, it seems. All at once I hear a sound like the whole of Niagara Falls was rushin' through my noddle and feel a sudden push. I am conscious of a tall man with a big stick and right beside him his friend the short man with the ready repeater. The first jolt was almost enough, but when I got another I just faded quietly out of the worries of life and the next thing I know is that our little friend here is leanin' over me. First I feel for the bank—gone. 'I guess,' says our friend, 'this is what you want,' and he hands over the Burkett family winnin's. I see then that he was mussed up a little and that he'd had quite a lively few minutes with Mr. Long and Mr. Short, but he shut me up when I got to askin' about it, and was for doin' up the slit in my head with his handkerchief for a bandage. 'You're pretty good at that,' I says, and he smiles and guesses that he's somethin' of a doctor, which was the first I knew of that. Well, as soon as my head gets so that it appreciates the points of the compass I tell him where the Burketts hang out and he helps me to home and mommer. And mommer falls for him right away. She orders me to peel a few centuries off the roll and hand it over to the doc, but there's nothin' doin'. He won't take a cent. 'A little feed at a swell restaurant, then,' says I. But he's also nix to this, and it's all we can do to get his name out of him by way of a farewell handshake.

"So that's all there is to it. We hear no more of the doc, but we think a lot

about him. And when we get ready to start the Unknown, which we've had layin' back against the day for the big killin', we remember a few things. 'We'll call him "Antietam Simms," after the doctor,' says mommer, 'and it's only right and proper that we should. Mebbe he'll see the entry and put on a small bunch for luck.' What I don't understand," and Mr. Burkett turned on Mr. Simms, "is why you didn't."

The bishop beamed on Mr. Burkett.

"Another thing that you didn't understand, I think, was that Mr. Simms was not a doctor of medicine, but a doctor of divinity."

Mr. Burkett seemed confused and it fell to Mr. Weathers to enlighten him.

"The bishop means that Mr. Simms is a minister—not a physician."

"A preacher?" gasped Mr. Burkett. "Geehitch! But I called him doctor and he——"

"You must remember that we did not go into explanations," said Mr. Simms; then, turning to the bishop: "I was coming out of the settlement chapel when the adventure occurred—and naturally, after the excitement, I did not correct him in his mistake. As I told you over the telephone——"

But the bishop raised a gently protesting hand.

"I do not think, Antietam, that you need any other exoneration than is shown by the facts of Mr. Burkett's story. I am sure our friend of the press will appreciate that, and whatever he writes will be of a nature to show that all this has been merely a misunderstanding." He looked benevolently around him. "We all agree, do we not, that it has been a misunderstanding?"

Mr. Weathers granted that it so appeared—although he would, of course, be compelled to lay the situation before his superior, Mr. Duggleby. He asked Mr. Burkett and mommer if they proposed to take the next train to town, and thus enabled that somewhat dazed individual to comprehend that a movement outward was expected.

"Well," said he, getting up and looking around, his gaze finally falling on

mommer, "it does look as if we'd butted in wrong. I s'pose we might have figured things out a little."

He stood awkwardly, fumbling his hat.

"All the same, pa," said Mrs. Burkett, rising, too, and adjusting her veil, "our intentions was of the best." She turned to the bishop. "You see, we don't know much about the church. We don't go, and we don't run up against people who do, much—particularly those that run things. We was married by a justice of the peace."

The bishop smiled.

"Your intentions, my dear lady, were splendid—I think our friend here appreciates that."

"And all the same, Reverend," broke in Mr. Burkett, addressing Mr. Simms and swelling at this kindly attention toward one he was wont to declare "the best wife he'd ever had," "all the

same we don't think any the less of you—that is, I mean, mommer and me stands just where we did. And if ever you want a new carpet for the church or to raffle anything at the bazaar, you know our telephone number." Then a look of concern passed over his face. "But it sure ~~is~~ bad luck to change the name of the horse."

And it remained for the gifted Mr. Weathers to adjust this difficulty.

"Why not call him just 'Antietam'?" he asked.

Pa Burkett looked his relief.

"Sure," he said. Then: "There wouldn't be any objection to that, would there?"

Mr. Simms met him half-way.

"No objection whatever on my part, Mr. Burkett."

He felt sure that, with the bishop's assistance, he could at least explain that much to Miss Wayslip.



SEA-SOUL

By Grace Duffield Goodwin

THE sullen sea lies cold and gray,
And huddled far below
Are the newly-dead of yesterday,
And the dead of long ago.

Yet once, within the sun's embrace,
The blue wave thrilled with bliss,
And Aphrodite's laughing face
Was that incarnate kiss!

O Love, O Death!—each human soul
Knows thy dark secrets well.
The deeps are silent; theirs the whole
Of Heaven, of Grief, of Hell!

THE ADVENTURE WITH THE BUTCHER

By Temple Bailey

LUCIA, with an eye to the knowing tilt of Peggy's hat, said doubtfully, "It isn't exactly what one would call an exciting career."

Peggy stuck in another hatpin and wheeled around from the mirror, her white hands flung out in protest.

"It is. It is the most exciting career in the world. It's like the Arabian Nights, and it's only dull and commonplace people who can't see it."

"Oh, well!" Lucia's tone was a little hurt, and Peggy made amends at once.

"Dear child," she crooned, "you aren't married. How could I mean you? You will find the romance just as I have when you have a home of your own, and a King of Hearts to cater for."

"I simply can't see the fascination of housekeeping."

Peggy laughed. "Oh, little blind girl," she said, "it's all romance and adventure. Why, I have had such things happen—such remarkable things, Lucia."

Lucia was unconvinced. "You make things happen, Peggy," she said. "Your whole love affair was different. Bob fell in love with you and you fell in love with him, but you ran away to Algiers because you didn't want to get married and settle down, and he followed you, and you had your honeymoon in the desert."

Peggy's eyes were dreamy. "You should have heard the tom-toms, Lucia," she said, "and the wild cries and the howling of the dogs, and then the night settling down, and the great silence."

She drew a quick breath. Her straight young figure was tense; her

face, with its halo of red-gold hair, a little white with sudden emotion.

After a silence Lucia said: "And you had a year traveling around the world and seeing things, and everybody prophesied that you would never get down to a humdrum existence, yet you have come home and have gone to housekeeping like any commonplace couple, and on the first morning of my first visit you are going to market—of all things!"

"It's because it's your first visit that I am going to market," Peggy assured her. "I haven't a thing in the house for luncheon, and hitherto I have ordered by 'phone. But I don't like the meats they have been sending, and so I am going to market to find a butcher, a real butcher in a white apron, with red cheeks, who stands behind a stall with a knife in his hand and says, 'Fe, fi, fo, fum——'"

"Peggy!" Lucia protested.

"And I am going to beard him in his den, and for luncheon you and I will eat the chops that have been cut from the parent stem, and that I have brought home in my little basket!"

"Peggy, you're not going to carry a basket!"

Peggy laughed again. "The romance of marketing, my dear Lucia, is in carrying your own basket. I shall bring home a little pat of butter, and a little jar of honey, and we will lunch in sweetness and simplicity."

"Simplicity—with your income—and Bob's!"

Peggy flushed. "My income has nothing to do with it, and neither has the income of the King of Hearts. I am going to be his housekeeper and

homekeeper in spite of the burden of money."

Lucia gave in at that. "Oh, Peggy, Peggy," she said, "you make life seem so different, somehow." And Peggy kissed her and said soberly, "The King and I want to make it different, dear."

They clung together for a moment, and then Peggy asked, "Is my hat on all right?" and Lucia winked away a tear and said, "It's a dream."

After which Peggy in her trim, gray tailor-made, topped by a white-winged turban, went downstairs singing, "To market, to market, to buy a fat pig——"

II

To Peggy, the market was an undiscovered country, and she fell at once a victim to its fascinations. Standing at the entrance she faced four roads of delight. The outer one led through a wilderness of fish-stalls, on which symphonies in silver-gray were flanked by the scarlet of lobsters, the pink of shrimp, and the green of sea-grasses laid over the soft crabs.

Straight in front of her were the vegetables—deep-gold pumpkins; peppers—emerald and red; potatoes of tender brown; the white and orange and purple and yellow of onions and carrots and eggplant and celery; and all the shades of green in cabbages and lettuce and parsley and spinach.

To her right the flowers and fruits wooed her with more delicate though no less seductive harmonies, and to the left came the Street of Butchers, white-hung and immaculate—where chickens displayed their plump breasts to the passers-by, with geese ready for tomorrow's roasting, with pigs in all stages from porkers to ham, with lamb tenderly wooing epicurean purchasers, and with the beef flaunting its crimson in mammoth roasts and steaks.

Peggy bought her jar of honey, a pat of unsalted butter and some little chocolate cakes. Then she went to find her butcher.

Instinctively she looked for the butcher of romance. Not for her were the stumpy little men with side-whiskers, or the keg-like automatons who dealt their wares stolidly. Her butcher must be tall and strong and red and white!

She found him at last in a big stall in the centre of the market, and his smile, answering hers, set her at her ease.

"I want chops," Peggy told him.

"How many?" He had a nice voice!

"Oh—there will be two of us at luncheon—and the servants—two servants."

He smiled again, and began to cut the chops, trimming them into delectable symmetry. He had nice hands, too, tapering and well-kept—and his ring . . .

His voice broke in upon Peggy's meditations. "Anything else, madam?"

"A roast—a company roast—and my oven isn't very big."

He helped her over her perplexities, smiling again.

"You see, I haven't done it very long," she confessed.

"Housekeeping?"

"Yes. You are my first butcher."

"Then I must be your last," he assured her, and stood with pencil suspended. "Where shall I send them?"

Once more Peggy's attention was caught by his ring. *Where* had she seen a ring like that?

She dragged her eyes away. "Oh," confusedly, "you want my name?" And she gave it.

Imperturbably he wrote it down. But when she had gone he read it over, adjusted his eye-glasses and read it again, and then he stared after her graceful figure.

"By Jove," he said, "by Jove!" And even when she was out of sight he still stared.

III

"He was a beautiful butcher," Peggy told Lucia and the King of Hearts.

They were having coffee in Peggy's little drawing-room. Peggy, in white with a yellow chrysanthemum behind her ear, drank hers sitting on the arm of her husband's chair.

"His voice was perfect," Peggy continued dreamily; "English—not cockney—a sort of Sothern-Willard combination, Lucia."

Lucia, a delicate vision in pale blue, shrugged her shoulders, "But he is a butcher, Peggy dear," and she made her languid way to the piano.

The King of Hearts laughed. "Lucia hasn't your sense of romance, Peggy. 'A butcher by the market-stall is just a butcher, that is all'—and he is nothing more!"

"Well, this butcher is something more," Peggy insisted. "If it hadn't been for you I should have lost my heart."

Lucia's pointed fingers hovered over the ivory keys. "You know you wouldn't have married Bob if he had been a butcher."

Peggy looked deep into the eyes of the King of Hearts, and caught her breath quickly. "I should have married the King of Hearts if he had been a—ah—hod-carrier," she declared, pink with enthusiasm.

"Oh, Peggy!"

"Well, I should," Peggy insisted. "Because if the King of Hearts had been a hod-carrier, there would have been some good reason. It wouldn't have been because he was too ignorant or too incompetent, or anything like that, but because he believed in the dignity of labor or was backing up a principle, or something, and he would have been the King of Hearts just the same."

Lucia was forgotten for a moment, while the King of Hearts thanked his wife, and she played on until Peggy's voice interrupted.

"The butcher wore nose-glasses——"

"I am not interested in your butcher," Lucia chanted between chords. "He furnishes us with good meat—he furnishes us with good meat, and that, and that, is the end——"

"It isn't the end." Peggy's tone

was dramatic. "It isn't the end, Lucia. For my butcher wore a ring on his little finger, and it was like the one the King of Hearts gave you five years ago!"

With a crash the music stopped. "Like my sapphire shield?" Lucia asked, after a startled silence.

"Yes."

The music began again. "Rings often look alike," Lucia remarked, with elaborate carelessness.

"What became of yours?" Peggy asked.

But the King of Hearts shook his head at her, and she rose and went to the window.

"It's raining," she declared irrelevantly.

Lucia drummed the muffled first chords of Chopin's dirge.

The King of Hearts stood up with a gesture of protest.

"What a hilarious atmosphere!" he commented.

The music wailed on.

"Oh, let's go somewhere," said the King of Hearts. And they went.

IV

THAT night, however, when Lucia had gone upstairs and Peggy was putting away the remains of the little late supper, she asked, "What became of Lucia's ring, Bob?"

"She gave it away."

"To whom?"

"To a young man who loved and rode off," was the explicit information.

"What young man?"

"The younger son of a lord."

"Bob!"

"I give you my word it's true."

Peggy stood in the pantry-door. Her white dress was looped high and over it she wore a long blue apron. In one hand she bore a dish of lobster mayonnaise, in the other a bottle of olives.

"I never heard anything so interesting," she declared. "Come and open the refrigerator, Bob, and I'll put these things in and then we can talk."

"Who was he, and where did he go, and why won't Lucia talk about him?" were a few of her leading questions, as she settled herself in a little low chair by the side of her husband's big one in front of the library fire.

Peggy's low chair seemed to partake somewhat of its owner's personality. It was pink and white and had a confiding way of leaning toward the big brown leather chair that belonged to the King of Hearts. In fact, so absolutely Peggy's own did it seem that the King of Hearts had taken to dropping books and magazines into it when other people came into the room, so that by no chance should anyone sit in it but the mistress of the house.

He drew it closer to him, with Peggy in it, as he answered her.

"He is Archibald Carson, and he went West to make his fortune on a ranch, and Lucia won't talk about him because he wrote her a letter and told her he wouldn't marry her and he wouldn't give a reason."

"Why didn't he send the ring back?"

"He had given her one in exchange, and he asked her to keep it and to let him keep hers—and as he didn't give his address, she was forced to do it."

Peggy laid her clasped hands on her husband's knee, and gazed at him in rapt excitement.

"Bob," she palpitated, "did he wear glasses?"

"Yes."

"And did he have a fascinating accent?"

"Oh, if you call it that—yes."

"And was he tall, and handsome, with a nice smile?"

"Yes."

"And his name was Archibald Carson?"

"Yes—but Peggy——"

"Oh, wait!"

She was out of the room in a whirl of white to come back with a card which she thrust before her husband.

"Read that," she commanded.

It was a business card, and on it was printed in heavy black type:

**A. CARSON
CENTRE MARKET
MEATS**

"There!" Peggy said triumphantly. "It came with the marketing this afternoon."

She settled back against her husband as if the last word had been said.

"Peggy," he warned, "don't romance."

"I'm not," Peggy said, with a nod, "but my butcher is Lucia's lover."

"Lucia wouldn't love a butcher."

"He wasn't a butcher when Lucia loved him," Peggy asserted.

"Oh, but such things don't happen in real life."

"Everything happens," said the maker of romances sententiously.

"Don't try to play Fate," she was admonished; "and if you take my advice, you will change your butcher."

V

BUT Peggy could not keep her finger out of this enchanting pie, so the next morning Lucia, having announced an intention to go downtown, was asked, "Would you mind stopping in the market?"

"I don't mind anything." Lucia's tone was as dreary as the rainy day.

"I'll give you a list," Peggy told her, "and the numbers of the stalls, and it won't be any trouble."

Lucia, entering at the west door of the market, was caught in the usual Saturday morning crowd, for in the capitol city marketing is not a thing to be delegated to stewards and maids and butlers, but is done by the heads of households; and thus it happens that the first lady of the land may touch elbows at times with ladies who keep boarding-houses and with ladies who do light housekeeping, and the wives of statesmen and diplomats hobnob genially with the old colored crones who sell herbs and garden truck on the south sidewalk.

Lucia ordered vegetables and fruit,

and finding sweetbreads as the remaining article on her list, made her way to the street of the butchers.

Once there her glance wavered from left to right. On one side of her a commonplace little man chopped steadily at the bone of a porterhouse; on the other . . .

Lucia stopped dead still in the middle of the crowded aisle!

For there, straight and strong and white-aproned in the midst of his scarlet wares, was Peggy's butcher.

And Peggy's butcher was Archibald Carson!

With her face flaming, she started on, saw his eyes flash with recognition, turned and went back to his stall.

"Why did you do such a thing?" she demanded without preface.

There were other customers waiting, but he said, "Lucia, Lucia!" as a man might who comes upon paradise suddenly.

Lucia, supremely conscious of the customers, said: "Peggy wants some sweetbreads."

As she said it her heart sank, but she repeated inanely, "Peggy wants some sweetbreads."

"Peggy shall have ambrosia," he assured her. "Let me get rid of these people——"

She saw him serve them; saw the flash of her ring as he cut and chopped and wrapped with deft, beautiful hands; heard his voice telling her the things she had wanted to know.

"May I come tonight?" he asked; and when she had said "Yes," in a dream, she swept out through the market and into a glorified world. As she rode uptown she was jostled by people in the crowded car, but she smiled so radiantly that more than one man stared, then dropped his eyes, knowing that here was no self-consciousness, but a vision of youth and happiness.

VI

"Oh, Peggy, Peggy!" she said, as

she came in, her umbrella dripping, her hair wind-blown.

Peggy, scenting the culmination of diplomacy, was wary.

"Did you order my things, dear?" she asked.

Lucia dropped into the little pink chair. "Did I order? Oh, Peggy, he said you should have ambrosia——"

"Who?" Peggy asked.

But looking deep into the laughing eyes, Lucia accused her. "You knew."

"Some of it, but I want to hear everything."

Sitting in the little pink chair, Lucia told the rapturous tale. Carson's allowance had been stopped because he wanted to marry an American, and Carson senior had ideas on the subject of international marriage. Without the allowance Archie couldn't run his ranch, and he was forced to give it up and accept the offer of a neighbor who wanted to sell his beef in the East.

"And because Archie believed in the dignity of labor, he accepted, rather than do nothing. But he wouldn't ask me to be a butcher's wife—as if that made any difference," scornfully.

Peggy, having visions of Lucia in that substantial office, gasped and recovered herself. "Of course not," she agreed demurely.

"He has saved something, and when we are married we are going back to the ranch, and there will be the still days and the long rides, and everybody miles away—oh, Peggy!"

"I know," said Peggy softly.

But that night she talked it over with the King of Hearts.

"And he told her all that in ten minutes in front of his stall, while the general public thought she was ordering sweetbreads."

"Poor general public," said the King of Hearts, as he dropped his arm over the back of the little pink chair, "to miss the romance!"

"To miss the romance!" said Peggy dreamily, as she laid her head against her husband's shoulder, with a sigh of perfect content.



ENTER—THE THEATRICAL SEASON

By Channing Pollock

“MY head aches,” quoth The Lady Who Goes to the Theatre With Me. “I hope nothing we see this week will require much thought.”

“Don’t be alarmed,” I replied. “This is New York.”

It was almost an epigram, and an epigram is something verbal that glitters but is not gold. Five or six times every year we who regard the playhouse as better than a place to digest dinner have to thank our lucky stars, and their managers, for performances that make the wheels go round. This is not often at the beginning of the season, however, and, with a single exception to be noted later, no production of the early Autumn need have disturbed the mental calm of an infant in arms.

Ours is a Peter Pan Drama, and it positively refuses to grow up. English and American authors write under the restriction that their work must be suited to tired and to immature brains. They must not add to the sorrow created by an afternoon slump in wheat, and they must not shock our sixteen-year-old sisters and daughters. When you consider how many of the big, pulsing, vital things of life may be discussed with young girls you will not be surprised that, out of seventeen or eighteen presentations, only one play, and that play a translation from the French, proved strikingly original or important. The piece in question is called “The Thief” and had its première at the Lyceum Theatre. Besides this, there were two good melodramas and a pleasant comedy.

Robert Edeson’s new vehicle, which

rejoices in the sweetly pretty title of “Classmates,” is one of the two good melodramas. It was patterned after the latest style of college play, with foundation material of juvenile love-affair cut on the bias, spangles of youthful spirit, and trimmings of “comedy relief.” You may not have noticed that the vogue in dramas is very like the vogue in dresses—that what one stage wears successfully will soon be put on a dozen other stages, and that eventually the mode will work its way from Broadway to Fourteenth street, just as the bouffant sleeve once worked its way from Fifth to Sixth avenue. “The College Widow” brought in the fashion of campus comedy, and since then most of our institutions of learning have been dramatized and many of our actors sent to school in them. Robert Edeson went to Columbia, Paul Gilmore to Yale, Henry Woodruff to Harvard, and Arnold Daly to camp with a boy-filled company of militia. “Classmates” shows Mr. Edeson at West Point—one newspaper writer called it “West-Point-on-the-Hudson-Theatre-stage”—and it is unquestionably the best entertainment of its sort that we have had in New York.

The first act of the piece is very properly its worst act, being filled with the silly nonsense and puerile piffle that make up most plays of its kind. An Irishman would tell you that “Classmates” would be better without any first act, and, indeed, that quarter of the story does nothing essential except to show most of its characters at West Point, thus enabling the offering to qualify as a college play. Duncan Irving, of North Carolina, hates Bert

Stafford, who comes from his own town, because both men love the same girl. Stafford seeks to disgrace his rival by getting the elder Irving drunk, and Duncan, learning of this, knocks him down. The blow causes blindness, and it is upon the discovery of this that the curtain falls. The serious element of the plot takes very little time in the scene, which is devoted to a foolish hazing and a footless minor love interest.

The second act marks time while the audience learns that young Stafford has recovered his eyesight sufficiently to take charge of an engineering expedition on the Amazon. I need hardly point out the extravagance of devoting thirty minutes to bringing about a condition at the end of a first act that has ceased to exist at the beginning of the second, but I mention the matter by way of establishing the argument of my hypothetical Irishman. The woman in the case, whose name is Sylvia Randolph, has accepted Bert upon hearing his version of the fight, and is abiding with the Staffords in a wonderfully characteristic drawing-room scene which the programme locates in Gramercy Park. Irving comes there with two of his classmates, who have been dismissed from West Point for being implicated with him in punishing Stafford, and, upon hearing that their victim is lost in a jungle, all three volunteer to go in search of him—like a comic-opera chorus announcing its intention of setting sail, yo ho, for the island to be visited by the tenor and the soprano.

Everything up to this point has been sufficiently commonplace, but right here the play takes a turn for the better. Irving, left alone with Sylvia, is accused of doing a noble thing only to find favor in her eyes. Instead of denying it, hero fashion, he faces the lady with a manly admission of her allegation and a common sense explanation of his purpose. He tells her that she doesn't love Stafford, that she loves him, that Stafford has tricked her with a lie, and that he is going into the jungle after a rival he loathes be-

cause he wants to bring that rival back and cram the lie down his thorax. This is a clever and original scene, utterly without theatricalism, and it breaks a path for the capital act that follows.

This act is laid in the jungle—a green vastness touched with scarlet, a forest choked with underbrush, slimy with reptile life, and baking in the white heat of a tropical sun. When the curtain rises this wilderness is desolate. There is a bad representation of dawn, in which the sun seems to have been thrown like a soft-boiled egg and to have spattered red all over the back drop. Then Stafford stumbles on, ragged, fevered, whimpering, dying of exhaustion. It is a remarkable piece of work that Wallace Eddinger does in this part, muttering incoherent sentences and crying in that weak, high-pitched tone peculiar to children and to men who have lost their nerve. The boy wanders away, and then the rescuing-party comes up. It is a rescuing-party in name only—deserted by its guides, as hopeless and as near death as the cad it has come to find. The food and water have given out; even the matches have been dropped from the pocket of their custodian. A grim flash of humor lightens the situation when this worthy, searching for the matches, unearths "a Thirty-fourth street transfer." Eventually, the party finds Stafford, and the rivals, hating each other with a bitter hate, stand face to face. "I'm going to take you back," declares Irving. "I'm going to take you back for a fair fight, and I'm going to beat you." For the time there seems no chance of *anyone* getting back. Then the heliograph of another party begins spelling things on a tree-trunk, and Irving commences a battle to keep his enemy alive until help comes.

Of course, it all ends "happily." Someone has said that marriages are made in heaven and the fourth act. Sylvia is shown that her fiancé has lied consistently, and shifts her matrimonial arrangements. The best bit in the act, strangely enough, arises from a secondary love-story that has been

nonsensical and unoriginal enough up to that moment. Bubby Dumble, a fat boy from Brooklyn, is to wed the sister of Stafford. He arrives an hour too soon, and in the course of a long, nervous wait he asks every minute or two: "What time is it?" A morning newspaper called this "conventional comedy repetition." It is hard to believe that any critic who saw only "conventional comedy repetition" in the excitement of young Dumble ever took the plunge into benedickism.

"Classmates" is perfectly acted. Mr. Edeson has the faculty of behaving on the stage as though he were not, and it is difficult to find words in which to convey a full idea of the grace and charm, the virility and sincerity of his work. That of Mr. Eddinger has already been described, and Frank McIntyre, a comedian comparatively new to Broadway, displays such smooth good humor in the rôle of Dumble that I hereby forgive the authors (have I mentioned that they are William C. de Mille and Margaret Turnbull?) for the old-fashioned and often untimely "comedy relief" of which he is the fountain-head. The fact that Flora Juliet Bowley, who plays Sylvia, did not create much enthusiasm among the local newspaper scribes establishes the reason for associating the scribes with the Pharisees. Miss Bowley's method, like Mr. Edeson's, is of the new school—a method of simplicity and naturalism—and whoever does not appreciate it must demand strict observance of hackneyed histrionic traditions.

The season has started off with quite an epidemic of meetings in the desert; there is one in Edmund Day's Western drama, "The Round Up," at the New Amsterdam. A more generous person than myself might attribute this epidemic to coincidence, but I cannot help concluding that Miss Turnbull and the Messrs. Day and de Mille happened upon Frank Norris's great novel "McTeague" at about the same time. You will remember that in this story Marcus Schouler, actuated by a fierce hatred, tracks McTeague into Death Valley, and there gives up the ghost, hand-

cuffed to his foe. The only difference between this episode and those in "Classmates" and "The Round Up" is that the heroes of the latter works do not die—a difference rather easily explained.

The wilderness of "Classmates" might be recommended to nervous old ladies as a quiet place to spend the Summer, but nervous folk will not enjoy the desert of "The Round Up." Buffalo Bill's Wild West is a sewing bee to what happens in the third act of "The Round Up," when the Indians begin shooting at the heroes and the soldiers begin shooting at the Indians. Adolph Klauber, in the New York *Times*, described the play as "Hippodrama," and this part of it is all that and more. If war is half as noisy, General Sheridan's definition of war beats Noah Webster's.

Nevertheless, the battle at the New Amsterdam is as thrilling a spectacle as you are likely to see in these days of mollycoddles, flanneled oafs and Hague Peace Conferences. In the first place, the setting itself is wonderfully fine; John Young, who painted it, has defied that law of physics which declares that a larger object cannot be put into a smaller one, and has crowded at least ten miles of landscape onto a stage thirty feet wide. When the curtain rises there is not a soul in sight. Then a dozen silent savages, mounted on ponies, appear 'way up in the hills, ride through a natural tunnel, and disappear in the direction of Seventh avenue. Following that comes a long scene between the two men, seeker and sought, and, at last, the battle. They are not rifle-gallery cartridges which explode in this conflict. The racket is deafening. Bullets plow into the stones and kick up clouds of dust on the ground. An Indian, killed as he stands on a ledge of rock, falls and hangs there, head downward, throughout the fight. Troops overrun the trail, firing constantly, and a Gatling-gun adds its vicious spitting to the din. Klaw & Erlanger put themselves in a class alone as producers of melodrama when they staged "The Round Up."

Mr. Day's story was invented by Homer, and revamped by Lord Alfred Tennyson, who called it "Enoch Arden." Echo Allen was betrothed to Dick Lane, who went away and omitted to come back. With a credulity unknown to life insurance companies, she assumed him to be dead, and married Jack Payson. Just before the ceremony Dick returned for his sweetheart, and Jack sent him off again, first collecting a matter of three thousand dollars due him from the disappearing lover. After Echo had become Mrs. Payson her husband was accused of murder and robbery, the chief evidence against him being his unwillingness, accepted as inability, to explain where he got the money to pay a mortgage on his ranch. To save his neck, Payson told Echo how he received the three thousand dollars, and she bade him never look her in the face again until he had found Lane. Payson went into the Bad Lands, and located the wandering gentleman, who, judging by the distance he had got from the home of the Allens, must have been the original Lane that had no turning. Just how one man finds it so simple to discover another in a trackless wilderness is a question that must be respectfully referred to Mr. Day and the people who wrote "Classmates." Presumably, the method is to shut both eyes, say "eeny, meeny, miny, mo," whirl around three times, and then walk straight ahead. At all events, the husband in "The Round Up" brought back the lover, and, exercising a woman's prerogative, Echo decided that she didn't want him.

Mr. Day's melodrama is a crude and clumsy piece of construction, arbitrary in its disregard of probabilities, old-fashioned in its method, and vague and vacillating in its character drawing. His hero and his assistant hero, who robs an express agent and marries the ingénue, both have yellow streaks the width of a rainbow, while his villain turns good in the last act with a suddenness that would have delighted the Salvation Army. The piece abounds in soliloquies, and other indications of ignorance on the part of its author, but,

strangely enough, it succeeds nevertheless in making a blunt appeal to the emotions. The scene in which Lane is told of the faithlessness of the woman he loves while the voice of the preacher performing the marriage service for that woman and another man is heard from the house, and the scene in which Payson's arrest is followed by his confession and the command of his wife that he "go find Dick Lane" are excellent, and so, too, is the dialogue between the rivals as they face death in the desert. The play has some wit, much good humor and an amusing character in the person of "Slim" Hoover, Sheriff of Pinal County, who, upon being refused by the girl he wants to marry, exclaims: "Héll! Nobody ever loved a fat man!" If there were no play at all, the spectacle of the battle in the hills alone would be worth the price of admission.

The dominant personality in the presentation is that of Maclyn Arbuckle, erstwhile of "The County Chairman," who slips through the piece like a streak of sugared cinnamon through a coffee cake, and with as pungent and pleasant a flavor. Mr. Arbuckle is seen as the Sheriff. Florence Rockwell, as usual, is lavish with her acting, making Echo behave as no sane woman could possibly behave anywhere except between the footlights and the back drop. I have heard men and women relate all sorts of fearful experiences, but nowhere, outside of the theatre, have I seen them act those experiences as Miss Rockwell, with staring eyes, outstretched arms and quivering voice, tells of her dream in "The Round Up." Anybody who lived a horror over again every time he spoke of it would soon be relegated to a strait-jacket and a padded cell. Julia Dean is charming in a minor rôle, while Orme Caldara, Wright Kramer, Joseph M. Lothian, H. S. Northrup, Charles Abbe and Harold Hartsell may be credited with capital impersonations.

I have blamed Mr. Day for not knowing how to handle his material in "The Round Up," and yet it occurs to me

that Augustus Thomas's "The Ranger," produced by Charles Frohman at Wallack's, may be taken as a demonstration that a great deal of knowledge is a dangerous thing in writing melodrama. "Any man who knows enough to be a good critic knows too much to be a critic," Wilton Lackaye once said to me, and the same dictum might be applied to the building of such plays as "The Round Up" and "The Ranger." Enthusiasm, mental muscle and a perception that takes no account of little things are the qualities that make an Owen Davis or a Cecil Raleigh. Subtlety, delicate effects and fine writing do not weigh in the balance. Mr. Thomas brought so much skill and experience to the narration of his story that the story itself is lost to sight. "The Ranger" is a very, very little cloth with a vast amount of fringe.

The play is a dead issue now, but there can be no time when a work from the pen of Mr. Thomas doesn't merit discussion, and I cannot better illustrate my point in this case than by relating an anecdote.

A well-known literary man who lives in New York is noted for the depths to which his spirit sinks in moments of depression. His brain, like those of most thinkers, is fallow now and again, and, whenever it becomes so, this author jumps to the conclusion that his talent is gone for good. "You ought to be worth a fortune," someone said to him last year. "I'm told you get ten cents for every word you write."

"Yes," answered my friend. "But think of the days I can't write a damned word!"

"A fellow-worker came to me last week," he said on the first night of "The Ranger," "and suggested that I read two books by George Egerton. I read them this afternoon, and couldn't make head nor tail of them. That worried me. I couldn't conceive a woman of Egerton's reputation writing stories without plots, and I took my failure to understand these tales as confirmatory evidence of the long-

suspected weakening of my mental powers. The 'missis' laughed at me, and, under her influence, I gradually relinquished my vision of a madhouse, and agreed to seek recreation at the theatre. We came here, and throughout the first act my terror grew and grew. When the curtain fell I turned to my wife with a groan. 'It's all up, Ruth!' I cried. 'I can't understand what this is about, either!'"

Nobody else understood the first act of "The Ranger," and understanding what followed involved a process of selection not unlike the eating of green almonds.

The scene was laid in Gordo Loma, Mexico, and a native policeman woke up a lot of slumbering loungers. Mateo berated his drunken wife for having sold their daughter. Mr. Harrington talked with some other men (identity still unknown) about danger at a mine, and Captain Esmond, with a body of rangers, shot one of them to punish him for having committed murder. Dorothy Osgood and Ellen Ainsley, arriving on the scene, proved to be two girls that Esmond had once pulled out of a bed of quicksand. Then there was a riot of five thousand bloodthirsty peons, and Captain Esmond, mounted on a piecrust-colored horse, scared them away and rescued the women. What relation any of these things had to the others did not appear in the first act.

Afterward, we learned gradually—very gradually—that Dorothy and Esmond loved one another, and that the gentleman executed for murder was Dorothy's brother. At least, Mr. Harrington said so, and, in order to make the romance more difficult, he threw in for good measure an accusation that it was Esmond who had bought the daughter of Mateo. Dorothy believed him, and we were obliged to wait two hours more to discover that the dead man wasn't the brother of anyone in particular, and that the purchaser of Miss Mateo was named Harrington. It was all very stagey and conventional, even after you had pulled it out of its shell, which wasn't easy to do. Dustin

Farnum played the title rôle, and the scenery was beautiful.

"Anna Karénina," in which Virginia Harned appeared at the Herald Square, was not distinguished by any especial merit. Tolstoi's novel of the same name was a great work, but it probably profited little in being dramatized by Edmond Guiraud, while the dramatization certainly gained nothing in being "adapted" by Thomas William Broadhurst. "Anna Karénina" might easily have been a thoughtful, vigorous, compact play, but, as dished up by Miss Harned, it was not thoughtful and it was about as compact as a load of buckshot fired at long range. A touch-and-go melodrama, "Anna Karénina"—crude, obvious, sketchy—which skipped fleetly from episode to episode and left no impression.

Tolstoi's story was told with the aid of twenty-eight Russian dramatic personæ, and the cast, read quickly, sounded like an exercise in Esperanto. Anna Karénina's husband, Alexis, was indifferent to everything but ambition, so Anna fell in love with Vronsky. She did it in the first act. Alexis suspected the truth, and went to the race-course to hear his wife scream when Vronsky fell from his horse. When she did scream Alexis took her home and reproached her. A telegram arrived, and the husband read from it that Vronsky was dead. Anna still protesting her innocence of any wrongdoing, he believed her, but carelessly left the message directly under her hand, so that two minutes later she knew that the man of her heart still lived. Whereupon she left Alexis and went to Venice with Vronsky, returning later for an "East Lynne" scene with "me child." Her husband divorced her when he was satisfied that her lover had grown tired of the affair, and Anna, soon satisfied of the same thing, threw herself under the wheels of a train on the Nijni Railroad.

I have made fun of this story in telling it to you because no one could have taken seriously the version of it staged at the Herald Square, but, if you

will refresh your recollection of the novel, you will find that it had the making of a wonderfully fine play.

Miss Harned cried bitterly from the moment of her meeting with Vronsky to the moment of her meeting with the Nijni Railroad. There wasn't much else for her to do, and she did it so conscientiously that I thought of the Johnstown flood and reached under my seat to see if the management had been thoughtful enough to provide life-preservers. It hadn't, and Anna Karénina died just in time to avert another drowning horror. John Mason brought all his art and experience to bear upon the ungrateful rôle of Alexis, Robert Warwick was a masculine Vronsky, and Albert Gran laughed his way through the part of Stiva just as he did through the part of Theodore Potard in "The Love Letter." There isn't much to say about the rest of the cast, except that one of its characters was named Serponkhovskoi.

"The Movers," written by Martha Morton and offered at the Hackett Theatre, is a drama with a purpose, and for that reason a praiseworthy effort. True, the sincerest part of the purpose probably was to duplicate the financial returns of "The Lion and the Mouse" and "The Man of the Hour" by trading, as they do, upon subjects much in the public mind; but this fact does not subtract from the merit that the theme of "The Movers" is one to provoke reflection, and needed reflection, to boot. The topic of mad extravagance employed by Miss Morton has been used again and again—farically in "Cynthia" and dramatically in "The Climbers," "Clothes" and "The House of Mirth"—and it will continue to be used until some perspicacious playwright hits the keynote of it and produces what, more than the superstructure built on any other question, is likely to prove "the great American play."

How much you like "The Movers" will depend upon how much you see of it. The first two acts, though a trifle exaggerated and unconvincing,

are vigorous and expressive. The last two are the first two all over again, with different characters and much Laura Jean Libbeyism. "The Movers," someone said very justly, is two plays exactly alike. It couldn't well be anything else, because, with the suicide of her hero at nine-thirty o'clock, Miss Morton winds up her story with the lobster and wine still an hour and a half away.

Chudleigh Manners, a young broker, is married to a woman who insists on living several blocks beyond his income. Mrs. Manners—her own name is Marion—comes of a family of spenders. Her father, up today and down tomorrow, squanders in blissful carelessness as to his ability to perform the difficult gymnastic feat known as "making both ends meet." Her mother and sister have always joined with her in cheating the old gentleman out of the small portion of the amount he hadn't got that he wasn't willing to spend. Phillipina Leigh, the sister, cherishes the holy modern idea that the recording angel keeps her account of men in a bank-book—that wifehood is a glorious state in which women receive everything and need give nothing in return. These are commonplace, every-day New York notions and conditions not the less fruitful of tragedy because they have become ordinary. Chudleigh Manners is driven to using money that doesn't belong to him and then to killing himself.

This ends the first play of "The Movers." The second is the same tale with a different conclusion. The hero this time is a college man, Harold Ray, who has been fool enough to marry Phillipina. She does with him as Marion did with Chudleigh, but, just as his ruin has been accomplished, the widowed Mrs. Manners comes into the house as a trained nurse and in a single evening does what Jean Jacques Rousseau couldn't do in a lifetime—converts everybody to the simple life. This childish, penny-dreadful trained-nurse business happened along at the very moment when "The Movers" was sagging under its burden of repetition,

and produced dismal failure where there might have been glorious success.

Vincent Serrano and Dorothy Donnelly are the best members of a good presenting company, which includes Malcolm Duncan, Ida Waterman, Nellie Thorne, W. J. Ferguson and Joseph Kilgour. Robert Conness is in the company, but by no stretch of the imagination could he be called good. The setting of the piece is in exquisite taste.

To devote more than a few lines to "The Other House," in which Richard Golden appeared for a short time at the Majestic Theatre, would be to blow up an ant-hill with dynamite. The piece was penned by Harry and Edward Paulton, and the wonder is not so much that the authors of "Niobe" could have written "The Other House" as that the authors of "The Other House" could have written "Niobe." An almost equally fatuous farce is "The Man on the Case," put there by Grace Livingston Furniss and offered in September at the Madison Square. This play depends upon the device of mistaken identity, which, in the absence of any earlier trace of the idea, I must conclude that Noah thought up during the period of his sojourn in the ark.

Courtney Longacre has had diamonds stolen from his house, and—no connection between the two facts—he wants his daughter Nell to marry a millionaire named Carroll Dempsey. The millionaire's arrival is coincident with that of a detective called Betterton, so what more natural than that the family should accept the detective as the millionaire and the millionaire as the detective? Dempsey keeps up the deception because he wants to be loved for himself alone. He is, and that's all. The company at the Madison Square included Jameson Lee Finney as Dempsey, Charles Lamb as Betterton, and Elsie Leslie as Nell Longacre.

"The Thief" is a giant among pygmies—a play of fine literary quality, nice dramatic values, straightforward simplicity and careful thought. In

the matter of construction it cannot be said to have had more than one or two rivals in the past ten years. The appalling inevitability with which its author, Henri Bernstein, piles fact on fact, tragedy on tragedy in developing the results of a foolish sin might teach much to the fool who sins and to the wise man who writes plays. Six persons are represented in "The Thief," of whom but four are important; the "big act" enlists the services of only two characters, and the whole story is worked out in a space supposed to be twelve hours. There are several performances in New York which you might as well see, but there is only one you *must* see, and that is "The Thief."

M. Bernstein's story deals with Richard Voysin and his wife, Marie Louise, comparatively poor people who are visiting at the château of old and very wealthy friends, the Lagardes. Fernand Lagarde, a lad of nineteen, whose mind is soaked with De Maupassant, fancies himself in love with Madame Voysin, who, though she worships her husband, is not above being sufficiently pleased at the infatuation to permit its continuance. Fernand's folly, harmless in itself, leads him into behavior which, when his father discovers the theft of twenty thousand francs and introduces a detective into the house, causes that observer to accuse him of having purloined the money. To the amazement of everyone, and the heartbreak of the elder Lagarde, Fernand confesses.

The second act takes place immediately afterward in the boudoir of the Voysins. Richard, grieved at the grief of his friend, stumbles upon a large sum of money concealed in a drawer in his wife's chiffonier. He suspects and questions, she lies; he cross-examines, probes, disproves, finally brings out the truth that Marie has stolen the twenty thousand francs—brings out a sobbing, pleading, despairing recital of the temptation that prompted her to steal. The poor woman, fearful of losing her husband's love, believed absolutely that the way to retain it was by constant appeal to his senses, by dressing

herself charmingly. I want you to read this sentence again, my friends, and to think it over, and to acknowledge the flawless psychology of the motive. I want you to admit the greatness underlying M. Bernstein's understanding of the ghastly feminine fallacy that the way to win and to keep love is by externals; by wearing beautiful things, not on the soul and in the mind, but on the back and in the hair.

This scene is wonderfully big and true. Marie, at bay, panders to the sex instinct in her husband and makes him promise to keep her secret. He agrees to become her accomplice, and then a dreadful thought springs into his brain. "Why was that boy willing to sacrifice himself for you? What was between you and Fernand?" This time Marie is able to protest her innocence with a ring of truth and dignity, but it is not until the morning that he can believe and forgive her. Lagarde has been about to send Fernand to South America, and Marie, her shame and contrition aroused, has made full confession. "We will forget it all," says her husband. "The page is turned down."

"The Thief" has only one fault—it contains an excessive amount of talk. Margaret Illington's carefully thought-out portrayal of Marie is an exquisite piece of acting. Many of the critics to the contrary notwithstanding, we have no one who could have been more pathetic, more convincing, or more dramatic in that boudoir scene. Her work is so thoroughly natural, so much of the modern school, that Kyrle Bellew, as Richard, seems old-fashioned and theatrical in comparison. Mr. Bellew is a man of brilliant polish and presence, but, excepting only in the last act, his performance of Voysin is not remarkable. The investiture given the drama is positively wonderful.

Two successes of the early season, "My Wife" and "When Knights Were Bold," were fully described as to their interpretation abroad in my last article. Neither is as well acted here as in London. Francis Wilson, at the

Garrick, is not half so funny as was James Welch in the rôle of the lackadaisical nobleman suddenly planted in the middle of a twelfth-century romance. The performance of "My Wife" given by John Drew and his company at the Empire is a very far cry indeed from the capital rendering which I saw at the Haymarket. Mr. Drew, as Gerald Eversleigh, emphasizes the fact that it is difficult to be a star and an actor at one and the same time, and, in everything but looks, Billie Burke is a poor substitute for Marie Lohr. Dorothy Tennant, as the fast lady, Miriam Hawthorne, does not suggest any dizzy rate of moral speed, and the worst disappointment in a cast uniformly inferior to that seen across the pond is Ferdinand Gottschalk in the rôle of the Hon. Gibson Gore. Mr. Gottschalk fills the part with character, but it is the character of Mr. Gottschalk, not of "Gibby." The whole production is a sacrifice to our American idea that the stage is not a place for acting, but for parading personalities. We no longer demand that a man or woman play a part; we insist that the part fit the man or woman. This condition, no doubt, is largely the fault of managers, who, instead of requiring impersonation, pick performers for their likeness to the characters to be assumed.

"Have you a father?" one can imagine them inquiring of a candidate. "Yes."

"Then you won't do. This man's father died twenty years before the beginning of the play."

The most interesting feature of the present musical-comedy situation is the fact that at least two of those produced during September were unsuccessful farces made over. The pieces in question were "A Yankee Tourist," in which Raymond Hitchcock starred when it was called "The Galloper," and "The Lady from Lane's," which persons with faithful memories had no difficulty in identifying as Roland Reed's vehicle, "The Wrong Mr. Wright." This scheme of making over plays while you wait cannot be too

highly commended. The public will benefit by it to the extent of getting good farces set to music instead of bad librettos, while authors may now hang over their desks the optimistic motto: "If at farce you don't succeed, try, try—musical comedy."

"The Rogers Brothers in Panama," at the Broadway, is an entertainment superior to any these comedians have had since the days of their first starring tour in "A Reign of Error." The piece is "by" so many people that a list of its authors and composers resembles a page torn from a city directory. There is nothing particularly witty or ingenious in the book, which, however, contains a very large amount of that nonsense which we are assured is "relished by the best of men." Comedy of the sort that underlies assurances that "the navy is a place where you get navy beans" and that Colon is on "the Christmas of Panama" certainly cannot be called "high class," but an occasional dose of it is far from disagreeable. The best five minutes of the Rogers Brothers is always the first five minutes one spends with them. In addition to its amusing dialogues, the present offering is beautifully costumed, and has a number of catchy tunes. "Way Down in Colon Town," "In Panama" and "Under the Jungle Moon" make one's mouth pucker. The Rogerses have with them this year an extremely clever comedienne named Marion Stanley, who would be a delight if only for the reason that one can understand almost every word she speaks. "Art knows no language," but it is pleasant to find in musical comedy an artist who knows English.

Despite the fact that it was produced by Charles Frohman, there is nothing to praise in "The Dairymaids" except the length of the intermissions. This piece, an English importation with one act of dull stupidity and one act of noisy horseplay, was produced at the Criterion. "The Alaskan" went into the Knickerbocker Theatre, and turned around, and went right out again. "Across the Pond," at the Circle, might as well have been.



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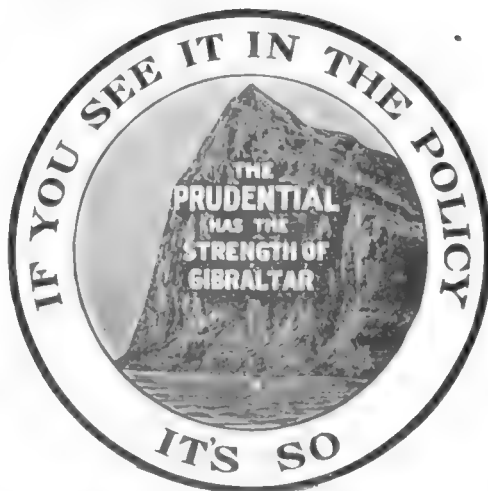
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26	17.18	17.62	18.41	
27	17.62	18.07	18.87	
28	18.08	18.53	19.35	
29	18.57	19.04	19.85	
30	19.08	19.57	20.38	\$21.97
31	19.62	20.14	20.95	22.59
32	20.19	20.70	21.53	23.26
33	20.79	21.33	22.15	23.94
34	21.43	21.96	22.80	24.65
35	22.10	22.65	23.47	25.41
36	22.81	23.37	24.22	26.23
37	23.56	24.13	24.99	27.06
38	24.35	24.95	25.80	27.98
39	25.19	25.81	26.65	28.91
40	26.09	26.73	27.56	29.90
41	27.04	27.69	28.50	30.95
42	28.04	28.72	29.48	32.10
43	29.11	29.83	30.53	33.32
44	30.25	30.99	31.63	34.61
45	31.47	32.24	32.80	35.99
46	32.76	33.56	34.02	
47	34.13	34.96	35.34	
48	35.60	36.46	36.73	
49	37.17	38.06	38.21	
50	38.83	39.79	39.79	
51	40.61	41.57	41.47	
52	42.51	43.36	43.27	
53	44.53	45.27	45.18	
54	46.68	47.26	47.21	
55	48.98	50.10	49.38	
56	51.44	52.64	51.68	
57	54.06	55.33	54.13	
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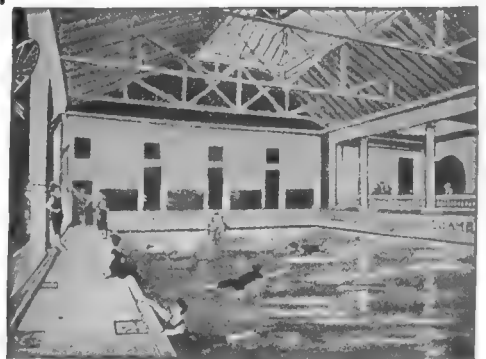
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The Holiday Number of TOWN TOPICS, continuing in the line of improvement that has made it a veritable giant among Christmas publications, will this season eclipse all previous numbers in beauty and importance. It will be published on *December 12th*, appearing as the regular issue of TOWN TOPICS of that week, and will contain 100 pages of the most interesting up-to-date matter, embracing social news, comment, stories, poems, essays, reviews, sketches, witticisms, etc., by leading writers of the day, with beautiful and appropriate illustrations.

Notwithstanding the increase in circulation which this season should exceed 125,000, the advertising rates remain the same as in the previous numbers, and are identical with the rates charged in the ordinary issues. Advertisers in this great number will have the benefit of not only the regular readers but of the many other thousands who will buy it on account of its beauty and unique qualities.

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The work takes the title, "Belles, Beaux and Brains of the '60s," and mainly concerns itself with glimpses of the men and women who made Richmond a veritable national capital during the Confederacy. As social prominence then meant political leadership, some new and pleasant sidelights are thrown on State and National politics. The ramifications of the families there represented have spread all over the world. The work is interspersed with enlivening incidents and events of the most engrossing period of the Civil War, many coming under the author's personal observation.

"Belles, Beaux and Brains of the '60s" is from the pen of T. C. De Leon, an editor, writer and poet of wide note, author of "Four Years in Rebel Capitals," "Creole and Puritan," etc., whose nativity and residence in the South, intimate association with President Davis and his secretary, Mr. Burton Harrison, during those exciting days, and close identification with the subject make him especially fitted to undertake a history of this kind. To give an idea of its scope, a few chapter headings are quoted: "White House Folk," "A Bouquet of Buds," "In Richmond's 400," "Wits and Wags," "Our Foreign Relations," "Some History Makers," "The Pious and the Sporty."

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These supplements are an addition to **TOWN TOPICS** and will in no wise affect its present scope and price. They are an expression of the publisher's aim to maintain **TOWN TOPICS** as the brightest and most interesting publication in the world, its unique short stories and its famed critical departments, including art, literature, drama, music, sport, fashion and finance, will be covered as elaborately as in the past by brilliant writers, fearless, fair and competent critics. Its news will include society in all the considerable cities and social circles in America and Europe. Its editorial comment, as usual, will cover all subjects of human interest, which will be treated with the courage that is born of vigor.

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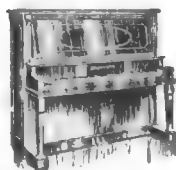
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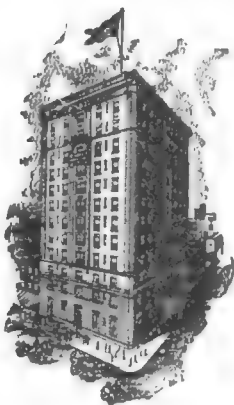
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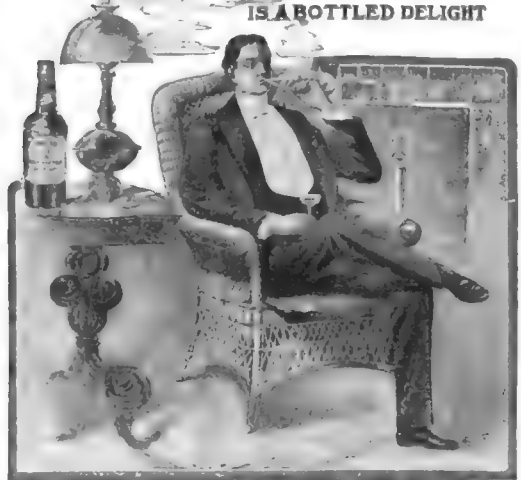
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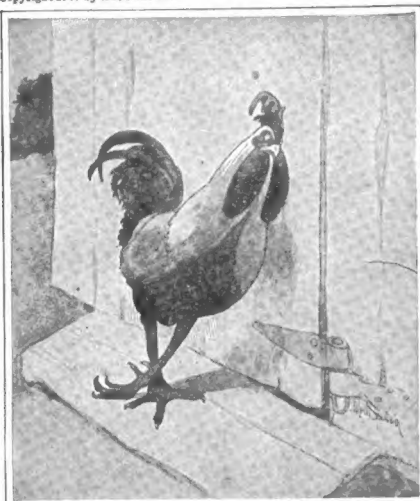
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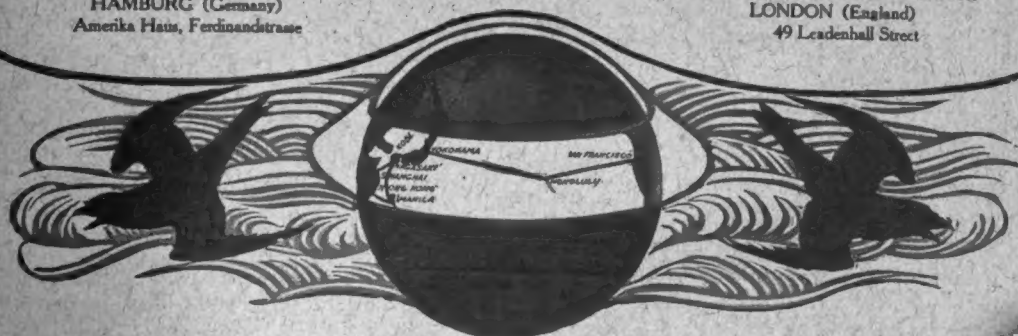
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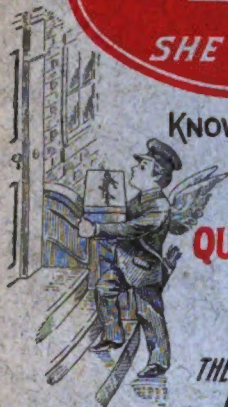
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